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BOSTON LIGHT, 1910.

From a Photograph, by the courtesy of C. B. Webster & Co., Boston.

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BOSTON  
OLD STATE HOUSE

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MCMX

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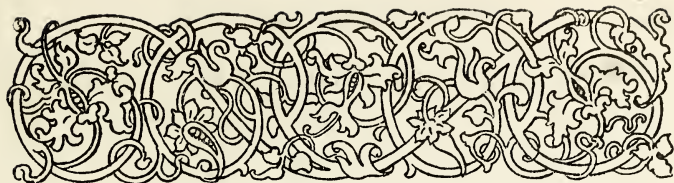


# BOSTON'S LANES AND ALLEYS

BY

JOHN T. PRINCE





## BOSTON'S LANES AND ALLEYS

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A PAPER READ BEFORE THE BOSTONIAN SOCIETY, COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
OLD STATE HOUSE, OCTOBER 9, 1888, BY

JOHN T. PRINCE

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PURPOSE this afternoon to take you on an imaginary trip to a few of the many lanes and alleys of our city, as they existed in Boston in the olden time. I hope by careful guidance and brief descriptions to give you a glimpse of some of these localities, as they were in my boyhood or in my father's time, but which we know to-day under greatly changed conditions ; and I shall endeavor to enliven my story with brief personal reminiscences of some old Bostonian men and things more or less closely associated with them, with an occasional reference to the streets and ancient landmarks which they recall.\*

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\* Some additions to this paper as it was originally read have been made from documents in the Society's collections. — ED.

At the outset I wish to commend the truthfulness of our Puritan ancestors in calling things by their right names ; with them a street was a street, a lane was a lane, and an alley only an alley. They did not call a narrow cart-way a street, but a lane or an alley, as did their English progenitors, and as their successors do to-day.

At the opening of our present century Boston was still a town of lanes and alleys. By a list of these, published in 1800, I find that there were then thirty-eight lanes and eighteen alleys included in the catalogue as still known by those appellations. Of these all but two of the lanes — Spring Lane and Ridgeway Lane — have disappeared, in their names at least, and by widening or other changes have become streets. In some cases, however, the names they formerly bore have been retained, — as for instance, Chardon, Bromfield, Henchman, Lindall (Lendell's Lane in 1733), Alden, Pitts and Allen streets, — thus perpetuating in some degree the memory of several well-known pre-Revolutionary families. Many of the old streets of the city have also felt the spirit of change, and the latest Directory gives us "Avenues" and "Boulevards," "Park-ways" and "Terraces." The reason for a change is often easy to discover ; "Front street" became "Harrison Avenue" in 1841, in the days of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too," log-cabins and hard cider ; and so of others, as will appear later.

Ridgeway Lane, one of the remaining passage-ways the name of which has escaped "Time's effacing finger," extends from Derne to Cambridge street, and was known by its present title in 1788. It seems to have been so called from the Ridgeway family, who owned property or resided in its immediate vicinity, but as its purpose was chiefly to give access to the rear of houses fronting on Temple and Hancock streets, it has no historic interest ; I will therefore begin our journey with a visit to Love Lane, a narrow, rural passage-way at the north end of the town, leading from Salem to North street, then the lower part of Hanover street — not the North street previously known as Ann street, with a disreputable character which would have grieved the royal lady, "Good Queen Anne," whose name it bore, had it reached her ears.

When I say a "rural" lane, I think I am justified, as its neighbor, Salem street, was at one time called Green Lane, an appellation given also to several other streets at different periods, and close at hand was the noble mansion and grounds of Governor Phipps, which in more recent years became a Home for Indigent Boys. In its cool shades youth and maidens could

List the tale that Love was telling,

in quiet happiness and all the simplicity of North-end courtships. I would recommend my hearer of antiquarian tastes to visit this region, so rich in historic

memories. Though its streets are now thronged by people of another race, there are still a few remaining houses, the former homes of men who gave Boston a world-wide reputation for industry, for prosperity and patriotism.

But Love Lane has another call on our affection, for here, at an early day in the history of the town, was located the North Grammar and Writing School, where presided that pattern of dominies, John Tileston, who for seventy-two long years well and effectually "taught the young idea how to shoot," thereby realizing gentle Oliver Goldsmith's description of the village pedagogue :

A man he was to all the country dear,  
And passing rich on forty pounds a year.

His familiar title among his pupils was "Johnny Tileston," an epithet given him not in derision but as an affectionate and loving appellative, for he was no "Johnny" in the modern acceptation of the term. Boston owes a debt of gratitude to John Tileston, for, in addition to the instruction he gave his boys in grammar and spelling, we are indebted to him for the introduction of that beautiful chirography known in its day—I might almost say, the world over—as the "Boston round-hand," where every letter was well formed, and as easily read as print ; it was long perpetuated in the counting-rooms of the merchants of the past, but is now, I regret to see, giving place to a style of penmanship

which it would hardly be an exaggeration to say looks as if a "daddy-long-legs" had stepped into the inkstand and then crawled over the paper.

That veteran school-master lived to the great age of ninety-two years, and in 1826 was borne from his home on Prince street to his last resting-place in the Granary Burying-ground. Love Lane was given his name by vote of the town authorities in June, 1821, in honor of his labors.

Master Tileston had as an usher or assistant, one Ezekiel Little, a man of gigantic stature and proportionate breadth of body. Justly or unjustly, he was suspected of being inclined to penurious habits, caused perhaps by his meagre salary; his mode of teaching was based on the proverb, "Spare the rod and spoil the child," and the school ferrule in his hands never found time to rest from want of use. Ezekiel's merits, as they appeared to the boys under his charge, were set forth in a somewhat irreverent style by one of his pupils, who had no doubt tasted the peculiar virtues of his rod, in a doggerel epitaph, which ran thus:—

Beneath this stone Ezekiel Little lies :

Little in everything but size.

His monstrous body fills this narrow hole,

But through h—'s keyhole crept his "little soul."

Before leaving this part of our city, so redolent of memories of Boston's early days, and the streets where



the Mathers, Governor Hutchinson, Paul Revere, and many more of her famous dignitaries once resided, we will linger for a moment to catch a glimpse of Unity street, which in 1795 extended from Love Lane to Charter street. At No. 19 was the house, now no longer standing, once owned by Benjamin Franklin, and bequeathed by him to his sister, Jane Mecom ; her descendants for three generations retained an interest in the property.

Not far away was Salutation Alley, so styled as early as 1708, and which retained its name until 1825. Here was once a famous tavern, which bore for its sign the figure of a man removing his hat to salute the wayfarer who passed its doors. Whether it took its name from his courtesy, or whether it had some allusion to the "Salutation," as the North Battery was called in the old records, is a matter on which the antiquarians are not agreed. It led from North, now Hanover street, to Ship, now Commercial street.

Wending our way southward we pause at the easterly end of the Old State House. Looking down King street, which became State street at the close of the Revolution, we shall find numerous relics of lanes and alleys that have lost their ancient titles. On the left is Devonshire street, formerly Wilson's Lane, running northward across what was once the garden of the Rev. John Wilson, the first minister of Boston ; Exchange street was formerly Shrimpton's Lane ; farther east is



Change Alley, called at various times by various names ; it was Pierce's Alley in 1708, Fitch's Alley in 1796, Flagg Alley in 1828, and since 1841, Change Avenue. "Alley" seems to have become almost a disreputable epithet. On the right is Devonshire street, once Pudding Lane ; next is Congress street, anciently Leverett's Lane, once Quaker Lane from the brick meeting-house erected by the Quakers after their persecution had ceased, and which, with its adjoining graveyard, occupied a lot on the westerly side not far from State street and nearly opposite Lendall's Lane, later Lindall street and now Exchange Place. Further down was Mackerel Lane, now Kilby street, with the old "Bunch of Grapes" tavern, and its convivial memories, just at hand.

Again going southward, we shall presently reach Spring Lane, one of the few remaining passage-ways which still hold their ancient appellation. In 1708 it extended from Cornhill (as Washington street from Dock Square to School street was styled before July 4, 1788) to Joylieff's Lane, once known as Black Jack Alley, which became Devonshire street in 1784. Here, in the early days of Boston, the cooling waters of a crystal spring allayed the thirst of Governor Winthrop, who lived close beside it, and perhaps also of Isaac Johnson, by tradition his neighbor, to whom was allotted the land bounded by School and Washington, Court and Tremont streets, on which the "Old Corner Book-

store" is one of our famous landmarks. But whether Johnson actually resided there has been questioned.

In my young days a pump drew forth the waters of the spring, but it has been gone for many years. When the foundations of the Post Office were laid, the current from this spring\* came to light once more, and I believe was utilized, and perhaps is still used by the occupants of that building.

Theatre Alley, from Milk to Franklin street, famous for the shop of Grace Dunlop, was Dindale's Alley before the old Federal-street Theatre was built; Board Alley, one of four or five so named, led from Milk to Summer street; the former is now a part of Devonshire street, and the latter is Hawley street. Both have many associations of historical interest, especially to the theatrical profession, but these I must pass without further mention.

If we continue our walk further south, we shall reach another lane, which in the lapse of years became a place of fashionable residences, that disappeared in turn when required for business purposes and the erection of the first building of the Boston Public Library. This was Frog Lane, now Boylston street. Whether named for "the frog that would a-wooing go," who shall say? But in my young days he might have croaked his lay of love undisturbed, for mud and mire were then

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\* The Bostonian Society marked the place in 1907 by erecting a tablet, suitably inscribed.

its dominant features. Beginning opposite the old Liberty Tree on Orange street, it extended to the waters of the "Back Bay."

On its northerly side, a short distance beyond the cemetery in which sleep some of the British soldiers who fell on Bunker Hill, and about where the sidewalk and fence of the Public Garden now are, were the head-houses of the Rope-walks ; these were of brick, with bulging walls, thereby showing the instability of their foundations, and a general air of desolation pervaded the region, inviting frogdom and its accompanying music.

At the southerly corner of Charles street and Frog Lane were the hay-scales, and the home of the bovine father, the property of the town, where he stood ruminant and chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy, or wandered grazing over the treeless acres which were the frequent scene of military display, then as now bearing the name of Boston Common.

A passage-way, which might well have been called a lane, extended westerly from Frog Lane parallel with the Rope-walks, to the water at the foot of Beacon street. Steps were taken towards laying it out about 1803, when it received the name of Charles Street, and Shurtleff tells us that a row of boulders brought from the high land in the immediate vicinity, extending westward to low-water mark, undoubtedly indicated the boundary line of the Common. Not far from the corner of Beacon and Charles streets was the gun-house of the

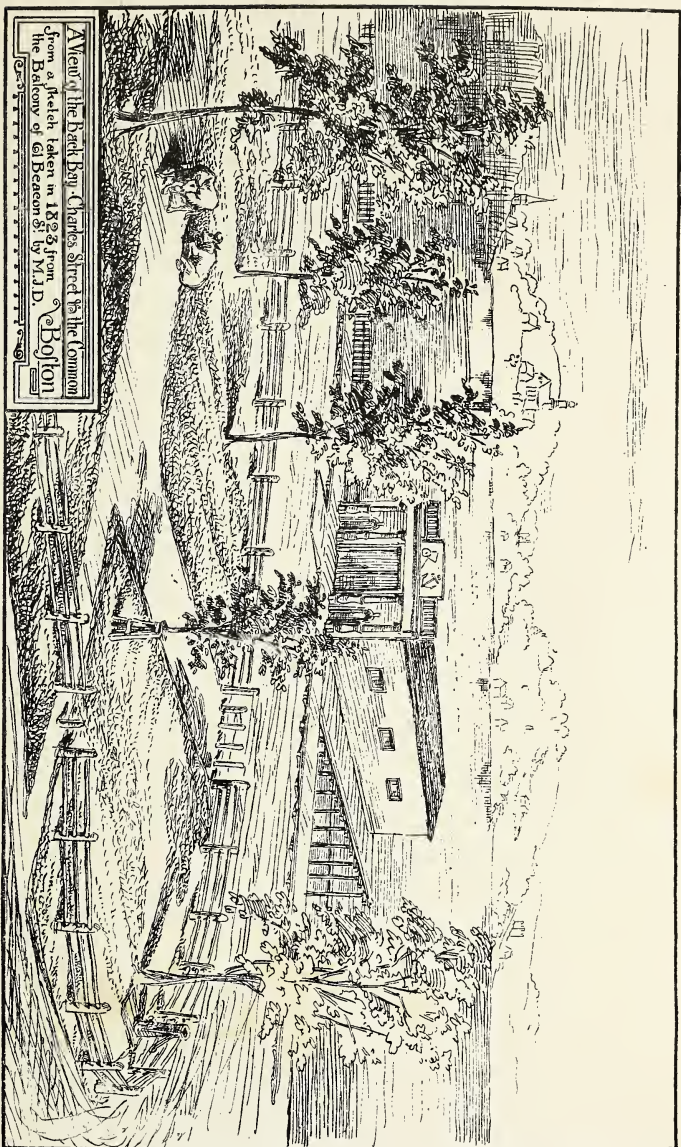
"Sea Fencibles," a semi-nautical rival of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company. It was organized by retired ship-masters in the days of President Madison, probably about 1814, and its membership was nominally limited to those of more or less maritime experience. This house was a sort of amphibious structure, and very properly was erected on a platform of piles driven into the marsh on the water's edge, but a few steps from the street. The Company was known to its boyish admirers as the "Sea Dogs," and their military manoeuvres, when out for drill or parade, were watched by them with patriotic enthusiasm.\*

Returning to Frog Lane, but a little farther south, and facing what is now Park Square, stood a large three-story building, its rear on Carver street, and its front protected by a high brick wall with heavy gates. This was the State Arsenal, or, as it was generally called, "The Laboratory." Here were stored for years a quan-

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\* A Certificate of Membership in the Sea Fencibles is in the possession of the Bostonian Society. This was designed by J. R. Penniman; it is dated in 1827, and attested by William Austin, Captain, and William L. Cazneau, Secretary. Austin had been one of the Lieutenants the previous year. At the top the motto SAILORS' RIGHTS BY SAILORS BEST DEFENDED is emphasized with swords and boarding-pikes. In the foreground below is a fouled anchor, with a cannon on the left and a mortar on the right; other implements of maritime warfare are effectively grouped about it, while a light-house in the distance at the right and a naval action between two frigates at the left, symbolize the objects of the Company. Another of its commanders was Nehemiah W. Skillings, and the senior Winslow Lewis was a Lieutenant. The Company ceased to exist about 1834.





A View of the Back Bay, Charles Street to the Common  
from a sketch taken in 1893 from  
the Balcony of 61 Beacon St. by W.J.D. Boston

ARMORY OF THE SEA FENCIBLES  
NEAR CORNER OF CHARLES AND BEACON STREETS.



tity of ancient muskets, known as the "Queen's arms," —relics perhaps of some forgotten victory,—the sale of which a few decades later aroused a storm of righteous indignation. The boys usually gave this building a wide berth, for they had heard that untold barrels of gunpowder were lying in its crypts, which if exploded would blow them "sky-high."

Once, seeing the gates open, boyish curiosity induced me to peep in and then stealthily to enter. I was rewarded by the sight of gun-carriages, artillery harness, a few cannon of shining brass, and other warlike implements; but as I looked about, most of its contents appeared to be harmless "truck," to my great disappointment.

Let us next retrace our steps, and, crossing a corner of the Common, pass through Mason street to a very narrow passage-way leading to Washington street. This was formerly called Sheafe's Lane, and was earlier known as Colburn's Lane, now Avery street. Therefore, why once Sheafe's Lane, and now Avery street?

The Sheafe family, which became prominent in New England in Colonial days, came in part from Cranbrook, in Kent, England, where they had been wealthy citizens with comfortable estates, and settled in Boston and Portsmouth. Those who made their home in Boston were intelligent, enterprising and patriotic men, and held many offices of trust. Henry Sheafe was a merchant, and subsequently the wharfinger of Hancock

Wharf, at the foot of Battery Street, a position which he held for many years. In 1813 he was Keeper of the State Arsenal, to which I have alluded, and Sheafe street, from Snow Hill to Salem street, still perpetuates the family name.

John Avery, a man of liberal education, was a distiller, and Drake, in his History of Boston, calls him a "Son of Liberty." He was Secretary of State of Massachusetts, holding that office under Governors Hancock, Bowdoin, Adams, Sumner and Strong, a period of about a quarter of a century, and evidently was a man of note in his day. This long occupation of so important a position shows his popularity, as well as the fact that rotation in office, on the theory that "to the victors belong the spoils," was a custom which had not yet come into fashion.

In an antique book in my possession, on Boston streets, published eighty-eight years ago, which I have already mentioned, I find it stated that "Sheafe's Lane extended from Avery's Corner west to the Common." Near its westerly end, on the south side, was a court or *cul-de-sac*, called Haymarket Place. The hay-market was on Common, afterwards called Tremont street, and extended southward from West street, covering the land on which Colonnade Row was afterwards built.

About the time of the beginning of Boston's life as a city, in 1822, or perhaps a little later, an ambitious owner of real estate in Sheafe's Lane petitioned for a



change of its name, hoping probably to enhance thereby the value of his property; he requested that it should be called a street and not a lane, notwithstanding the fact that it was and still is so narrow that two vehicles cannot pass each other at any point in its entire length. As the family name of Sheafe was perpetuated in the once lovely street on Copps Hill, to which I have already alluded, why not give John Avery, of Avery's Corner, an opportunity to have his name handed down to posterity? And so, in 1826, after long deliberation, the name was changed, and the narrow thoroughfare then became and is to the present day known as Avery street.

On Common, now Tremont street, and south of Mason street, stood the "Haymarket Theatre," which was opened the day after Christmas in 1796, and closed early in 1803. It had a gallery, but the structure was very roughly fitted for the comfort of spectators. Some sixty or seventy years ago I was crossing the Common with a schoolmate on a bleak winter night. The ground was covered with snow encrusted with sleety ice, through which we slumped at every step. We were on our way to attend a Circus which was exhibiting there, and, as part of a very meagre audience, we saw Tatnall, "the intrepid horseman and bareback rider," perform his "daring feats" astride of three horses running abreast. Mestayer, who was perhaps a progenitor of the Mestayers well known to theatre-goers

of a more recent day, rode around the ring as the "infernal horseman." His diabolical equipment consisted chiefly of a tin hat enveloped with squibs, which sent forth a fiery shower as he urged his horse to "frenzied speed." But the excitement must have been only moderate after all, for the entire receipts of the house, as I remember it, could not have been more than ten dollars.

### *Theatrical Apparatus.*

NOTICE is hereby given, That

*On SATURDAY next, the 26th of Feb. Inst.*

At 10 o'clock, A.M. will be offered for Sale,

At PUBLIC AUCTION, in the *Haymarket Theatre*, in *Boston*,

**A**LL the Moveable PROPERTY and CHATTLES, of every description, belonging to said Theatre—consisting of Scenery Machinery, a number of Iron Stoves, Pipes, Candlesticks, Branches, Lamps, Iron Weights, and a variety of other articles ordinarily in use in such Buildings.

Among the Articles above referred to, the object more especially deserving attention is the SCENERY—of which there will be exhibited for sale, an unusually large and various assortment, almost new, and of the most splendid description—All which it is presumed may, for a trifling expence, be adjusted so as to accommodate other Theatres of inferior magnitude.

*Conditions of sale, will be made known at the time and place above mentioned.*

S. BRADFORD, Aucr.

It appears by an advertisement in the *Independent Chronicle*, of February 21, 1803 (of which a fac-simile appears above), that the contents were sold by auction on February 26th; a week later, the superstructure was sold to be demolished and the materials to be at once removed. The auctioneer assured the public that "the

Timber and Materials, of which the fame is constructed, are in quality equal if not superior to those of any other edifice on the Continent." The land with "a most excellent Cellar to the whole extent thereof," was offered at private sale by a "Committee of the Proprietors."

About the year 1813, John Roulstone, who had been a stable-keeper in Essex street, set up a riding school in Haymarket Place, and continued it for a number of years. He taught, in addition to horsemanship, cavalry and broad-sword exercise, and military men learned to ride with ease and safety, and to occupy their proper places on parades. The cavalry officers were usually instructed by Roulstone in the evening hours, the days being devoted to his lady pupils, whom he taught to mount and dismount, and to be fearless and graceful when on horseback. As a cousin of mine was one of his pupils, I was occasionally privileged to witness the riding lessons at the Haymarket.

Among the military men who frequented the place at that time were members of two cavalry companies, the Boston Hussars and the Boston Light Dragoons. The Boston Hussars were organized in 1810, with about fifty men, and were disbanded eight or ten years later, after the close of the War of 1812 had destroyed much of the popular interest in military affairs. In its day the Company was distinguished for the social prominence of its members, and not less for the splendor and

cost of its uniform and equipments, which were similar to those of the Prussian Hussars of the period ; moreover, most of the members owned their mounts, which, as may well be imagined, were fine specimens of the equine race.

The first Captain of the Company was the Hon. Josiah Quincy, then a member of Congress, and later Mayor of Boston. His First Lieutenant was Charles Porter Phelps (Harvard 1791), who succeeded to the command on the resignation of Mr. Quincy. Other members beside those mentioned were Moses Williams, Richard Sullivan, Andrew Eliot, Patrick Grant, Samuel D. and Richard D. Harris (sons of Jonathan Harris, a prominent merchant who built the mansion on Pearl street known as "Harris's Folly"), Ralph Haskins, William Sturgis, Joseph Head, afterwards a member of the famous New England Guards, and W. E. Jeffries, a son of the well-known physician, Dr. John Jeffries. Young Jeffries died while a member of the Hussars, and the Company paraded at his funeral in full uniform ; the horse of the dead soldier was led in the solemn procession with the usual trappings, and on the saddle rested his cap, sword and boots, the latter reversed, as was customary on such occasions.

So little is on record concerning the volunteer militia companies of Boston, in the earlier part of the century, though famous in their day, that some further account of this troop may be an interesting digression in our

travels. In the collections of the Bostonian Society are preserved a copy of the Regulations of the Hussars, and the full uniform of Captain Phelps, presented by his children, together with his pistols and other equipments.

The helmet was a high, bell-crowned cap, its front adorned with a large plate of brass, and surmounted by a tall black plume tipped with scarlet. The coat or jacket was of green, — that of the privates thickly embroidered with bright yellow cord, for which gold cord was substituted on the coats of the officers; green small-clothes and high boots with leather tassels; a scarlet sabre-tache, embroidered in gold with the initials of the Company, hung from the sword-belt, and a scarlet "pelisse," snugly fastened at the neck and falling loosely over the left arm — worn only on parades — completed the dress. Each man was armed with a brace of pistols and a long Prussian sabre. When the War of 1812 broke out, the Company volunteered and adopted a simpler and more serviceable uniform.

Party feeling ran high at that period, and the Company was composed almost entirely of Federalists; but on the inauguration of Elbridge Gerry as Governor of the State in 1811, a strong Anti-Federalist, they tendered him an escort from his home in Cambridge to the State House, which he accepted. This was their first parade, and a beautiful standard presented by Lt. Gov. Phillips was carried in the ranks. Their appear-

ance was hailed with great applause, for their splendid uniform and excellent drill. When President Monroe visited Boston in July, 1817, a cavalry battalion composed of the Hussars and the Light Dragoons, under Captain Phelps acting as Major, met him at Roxbury, and with the Selectmen and a large procession, conducted him to his lodgings at the Exchange Coffee House. This was probably their last appearance in public.

To return to Sheafe's Lane. My knowledge of this locality covers more than seventy years, and came about in this way. "Election Day" in the year 1813 fell on Wednesday, May 12, and on the previous evening the stable of the old Lamb Tavern, which stood where is now the Adams House, was burned; this stable, which covered most of the land behind the tavern, extended back as far as Mason street, and in the fire fifteen horses lost their lives, and as many more were rescued from the flames. An early privilege of Boston boys was to "go to 'Lection," as it was called, and in 1813 I attended one for the first time. I was arrayed in a blue nankin jacket set off with large pearl buttons and in immense white pantaloons of the prevailing fashion. My father's curiosity to see the havoc caused by the conflagration of the previous evening, which had created a great excitement in the town, took him to Mason street on Election morning, where the firemen were still throwing water on the charred debris of the stable.



Suddenly, as we stood there, an unlucky turn of the spouting hose sent a smutty jet of filthy water plump upon my white trousers, as it glanced from the body of an ill-fated horse which had been burned to death in the fire. This unfortunate ducking necessitated a hasty retreat to our home in Myrtle street, and a change of clothing. Thus you will see I have good cause to remember Sheafe's Lane, though seventy years have elapsed since that unhappy morning.

These equine experiences recall the fact that there was an earlier Circus than the one already mentioned, in this immediate vicinity, which though somewhat ephemeral like the other, was famous in its day. It held its exhibitions, as we learn from one of its advertisements, in an "Amphitheatre," specially erected for it "at the bottom of the Mall."

For a century (1722-1824) that part of Tremont street which extended from School street to Frog Lane, opposite the Common, was known as Common street; for some little distance south of Frog Lane, it was, in 1741, called Walker's Lane. "The Mall" was extended by a vote of May 13, 1795, to the end of "Foster's pasture," so-called. The "bottom of the Mall," mentioned in the advertisement of the "Amphitheatre," must therefore have been about opposite the Head estate, and as the building is said to have been "adjoining Mr. Hatch's," whose tavern was on Tremont street near Mason street, it perhaps stood on the land

where the Haymarket Theatre was afterwards erected, and was near the scene of that disastrous fire which has lingered so long in my memory. It was here, on the 12th of May, 1795, that a famous Scotch equestrian performer, John Bill Ricketts by name, opened a place for the amusement of the public.


He had gained some reputation in Philadelphia, where in April, 1792, he conducted a riding-school, and later advertised a Circus, which was attended by President Washington on the 22d of April, 1793. Ricketts came to Boston two years later, and his announcement, printed in the *Boston Centinel* of May 9, 1795, described his attractions in the following terms :—

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### *AMPHITHEATRE.*

J. B. RICKETTS presents his respects to the LADIES and GENTLEMEN of BOSTON, and its vicinity, and begs leave to inform them, that he is erecting at a very great expense, an Amphitheatre, at the bottom of the Mall, for the purpose of exhibiting Equestrian Exercises, and other Amusements, which will be commenced on Tuesday, the 12th inst.

Boxes may be taken from ten o'clock in the forenoon, till three in the afternoon, at Mr. Hatch's adjoining the Amphitheatre: also tickets for the Pit.

 Doors will be open at five o'clock, and the performance will begin at a quarter before six.

N. B. The Evening's Entertainment will conclude with Mr. Ricketts's carrying Master Long, a child only six years old, on his shoulders, in the attitude of a *Flying Mercury*, on two horses at full speed.

Box one dollar, Pit half a dollar.

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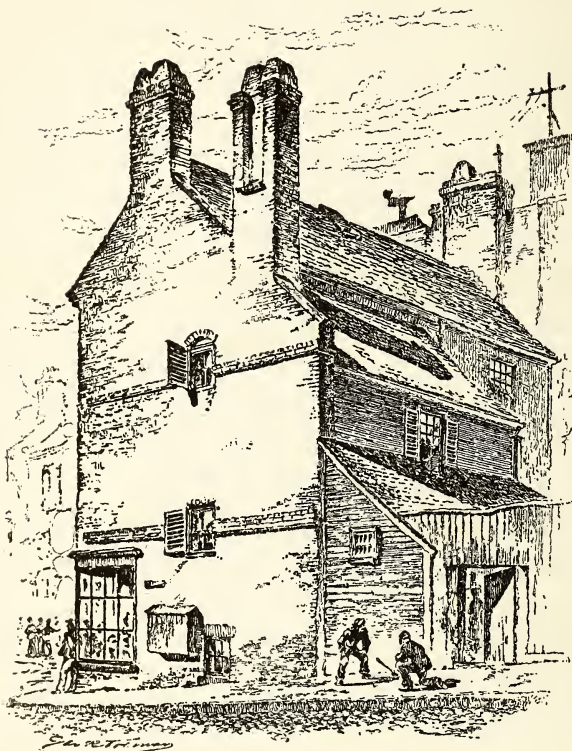
From a bill of his performances which is still extant, it appears that "in addition to a great variety of eques-



trian feats," he offered a display of what he styled "Egyptian Pyramids, as described by Addison in his travels through Egypt," in which he was assisted by eight persons "dressed in character." The "Manual exercise with a firelock, in the character of an American officer, going through all the manuvres," [*sic*] a leap from his horse in full speed, "over a ribbon," as shown in a cut which adorns his bill, and other acrobatic acts of a similar character, concluded the entertainment.

The price of admission to the show, which it will be seen did not vary greatly from similar exhibitions of a much later date, was "Boxes, One Dollar; Pit, Half a Dollar." The doors were opened at Five in the afternoon, and the performances begin at Six. Ricketts, like Roulstone, opened a riding school, "for the purpose of instructing Ladies and Gentlemen in the elegant accomplishment of Riding and Managing their Horses on the Road or Field." A year or two later he returned to Philadelphia, where in December, 1799, his Circus was entirely destroyed by fire.

I find my paper has wandered far from its starting-point. The amusements of our people in the closing years of the eighteenth and the opening years of the present century, and the "Moral Lectures," as their theatrical entertainments were called, when "Stage-plays" were forbidden by law, would furnish a fruitful theme, but on these I drop the curtain.



HOUSE OF ROBERT NEWMAN, SEXTON OF CHRIST CHURCH,  
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THE DUTCH PIRATES IN BOSTON  
1694-95

BY THE

REV. GEORGE M. BODGE





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A PAPER READ BEFORE THE BOSTONIAN SOCIETY, COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
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REV. GEORGE M. BODGE

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IN the beginning I may explain in a word the manner in which the incidents connected with the pursuit and capture of the Dutch Pirates, by Boston men and vessels, came to my notice. It was in the early part of my researches in reference to the History of the Soldiers in Philip's war, and directly in the pursuit of data bearing upon the career of Capt. Samuel Mosely, who was the leader in this affair and also a distinguished officer in the Indian war. His name led me to the discovery of the papers preserved in the Colonial Archives, relating to the trial of the Pirates, some extracts from which are published in my book. But I found that while the historians of

Massachusetts have passed over the affair in almost total silence, one able and studious antiquarian writer, the late Mr. Charles Wesley Tuttle, had discovered, carefully investigated, and incorporated the incidents in his papers upon the "Conquest of Acadie." From the same original sources, and assisted by his hints and studies, I bring together the material of the present paper.

In order to a better understanding of the subject, a brief statement of the situation of the Colony in general, and the condition of Boston in particular, may be helpful. At the period with which we are concerned, from 1672 to 1675, the American Colonies were still dependencies of the maritime nations of Europe. The chief of the powers concerned with the Northern Colonies were the English, French, and Dutch. Whenever war was declared in Europe between these powers, its effects were felt in their respective Provinces; and as results of the wars and treaties, the Colonies without any choice in the matter were partitioned, or granted *entire*, from one power to another, and passed thus from one control to another.

The Dutch were still the rivals of the English upon the sea, but their common hostility to France, the ever alert and hereditary enemy of both, had held the two nations as allies in nearly all former wars in Europe, though petty struggles occurred between the two when no general war was on. But Charles II proved to be a

steady enemy of the Dutch, and the friend or dupe of the French king. The "Navigation Act," so damaging to the Dutch, was the stroke of English legislation which at once kindled Dutch opposition, for it was a practical closing of all English ports to the Dutch trade.

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The only considerable Colony which the Dutch had settled in America was New Netherlands, at the mouth of the Hudson River, with its capital, New Amsterdam, on Manhattan Island. As a result of the hostilities in Europe, the Colony of New Netherlands was seized in 1664, and reduced to the control of England, confirmed by treaty in 1667.

The alliance of England and France in 1672 was for the plain purpose of the destruction of the Dutch States, and the partition of their territory between the two powers. All the available forces of the Dutch by land and sea were required to avert the destruction that threatened at home, while her Colonies abroad were left to their own defence. Only two Colonies now remained to the Dutch in the New World,—Curaçoa in the West Indies, and Surinam in South America.

The French possessions embraced the greater part of North America, from the Gulf of Mexico up the great river system of the Mississippi to the great Lakes, and eastward by the St. Lawrence system to the Atlantic, claiming also all the territory subsequently known as Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Eastern Maine, as



far as the Kennebec River. These latter possessions were known as Acadie, and for centuries served as a bone of contention between the European powers, especially France and England, and repeatedly passed from one to the other, according to the varying fortunes of war.

In Cromwell's time (1654), Massachusetts Colony assumed the right to settle the boundary line of New France or Acadie, and, in a time of peace between England and France, organized an expedition from Boston, using a small fleet which Cromwell had sent to Boston for another purpose. Under command of Major Robert Sedgwick of Charlestown, and Capt. John Leverett, afterwards Governor, this force made the conquest of the surprised and unprepared Acadians in August, 1654. While no proof is found that this expedition was sanctioned by Cromwell, the result was accepted, and the Province retained until 1667, when Charles II restored it to France, while Massachusetts still held on to its possession for three years longer.

It was greatly to the indignation of Massachusetts and the dismay of several Boston merchants, that the French were restored to the possession of Acadie, where Boston parties had established trading-houses and carried on increasingly profitable business. The French immediately (in 1670) began to repair their old fortifications, and also those which the English had built, and a small garrison was placed in each to protect



French interests and possession, especially against Boston traders.

This was the situation as between Massachusetts and Acadie, when, March 7, 1672, England joined France, and declared war against the Dutch. The navy of the Dutch was large and powerful, and was scattered over the sea to all the ports. Two of the ablest commanders in Europe were at the head, De Ruyter and Van Tromp. Their fleets were a constant threat to the English and French Colonies, along the whole American seaboard. The king's declaration of war was proclaimed in Boston,\* and he enjoins all his dear and loyal subjects to arm themselves and prepare to fight against the Dutch fleet which he tells them is fitting out to destroy English commerce with the Colonies and will be especially injurious to the colonial trade with the West Indies. Immediate steps were taken at Boston, the proclamation was made in the usual public places with the sound of a trumpet, and messengers despatched to the other Colonies and the seaboard towns.

In the Spring of 1673 the two Dutch fleets met in the West Indies and joining sailed northward along the American coast, capturing many English vessels off the Virginia shores, and a ship from New York, which gave them information of the defenceless state of that Colony, which they immediately proceeded to attack and

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\* The original document is still preserved in the State Archives, Vol. 241, pp. 263-64.

capture ; so that in July of 1673 the Dutch flag of the Prince of Orange was flying over the restored Province of New Netherlands, a new government was established, and Manhattan was re-christened New Orange, in honor of the Prince.

While this was a great triumph to the Dutch, both in the American Province, and in Europe, it was a cause of alarm and shame to England and its Colonies. Massachusetts took immediate measures to protect its ports against the dreaded invasion. In Boston Capt. James Oliver was ordered to appoint some meet person or persons to look out by day and night from Point Allerton, for the approach of any fleet of ships, and upon discovery of four or more together, to fire a beacon, which he shall erect upon the highest point of Allerton, and also on Long Island, so that the lights may be seen at Castle Island by the commander-in-chief, who is to act accordingly.

But in England the *people* were opposed to the war ; and the injury to their commerce and the threat to the Colonies roused their indignation against the king, and Parliament soon forced Charles to make peace with the Dutch. The treaty of Westminster was concluded February 9, 1674.

In the meantime the Dutch had gone steadily forward, fitting out privateers to prey upon English and French commerce. In the Summer of 1674 the Dutch frigate "Flying-Horse" refitted at Curaçoa, and there

the commander, Capt. Jurriaen Aernouts, received from the Dutch Governor a commission authorizing him, in the name of the Prince of Orange, to make war upon, plunder and spoil, "all enemies of the Great States of Holland," etc. The news of the treaty of Westminster had not reached the government at Curaçoa when he granted this commission, so that it was aimed at English and French alike. The privateer commander did not hear of the peace with England until he arrived at New Orange (now New York), at the beginning of July.

But the commission was still in force against France, and while refitting and recruiting in New York, he became acquainted with a certain Capt. John Rhoades, of Boston, who was an experienced pilot, and of an adventurous spirit, and who excited the Dutchman's zeal for the conquest of Acadie. Rhoades was well acquainted with that country, and familiar with its approaches and harbors; he had recently been along the coast and knew the weakness of the French defences. Capt. Aernouts resolved upon the attempt to make a conquest of Acadie, and his officers and crew joined heartily in the scheme. Rhoades was made chief pilot of the "Flying-Horse," and the ship with a crew of one hundred and ten men sailed from New York, and arrived in the Penobscot river and anchored in front of the French garrison at Pentagöet, now Castine, before any intimation of his intention was given. The commandant,

M. de Chambly, was Governor of Acadie, and his garrison consisted of only thirty soldiers.

After a brief resistance, himself being wounded, he surrendered, and with his officers, was taken on board the Dutch ship and a ransom demanded for his release. While the young officer Castine, afterwards the famous Baron Castine, was sent by him to Count Frontenac at Quebec to obtain the ransom,—a thousand beaver skins or their equivalent, — Capt. Aernouts, not being able to spare men to garrison the fort, destroyed it, removing all its armament, ammunition, etc.; and making the French inhabitants swear allegiance to the Prince of Orange, as the condition of remaining in their homes. Then he sailed eastward, making conquest of all the forts and trading-posts as far as the St. John's river, and then proclaimed the dominion of the Prince of Orange over all Acadie lying between the Penobscot and St. John's rivers, to which territory he gave the name of "New Holland."

Several of the original letters of Count Frontenac to various persons concerning this affair are still preserved in our State Archives. In one of these, to Governor Leverett, he declares his belief that the jealousy of the Massachusetts people favored and abetted the attack of the Dutch, and charged that one of the chief actors was a citizen of Boston, meaning Rhoades. And he especially condemned the Massachusetts authorities for allowing the Dutch to find a harbor in Boston while

returning with their prisoners and plunder taken from a nation with whom the English were then at peace.

But Governor Leverett was not moved by these remonstrances, although the accusations were all true, for when Capt. Aernouts returned in September, and asked permission to come into the inner harbor, he had not only consented, but willingly purchased the cannon and other armament of the dismantled French forts, and the people bought the other plunder and made a good thing out of it. The cannon were acceptable to replace those which had been rendered useless by the great fire at the Castle Fort a short time previous.

There is no doubt that the people of Massachusetts were greatly rejoiced to see the French driven out of Acadie, which was such a profitable field for their trade in fur and fish and timber. The Dutch captain was at once besieged with applications to grant licenses to the Boston traders to do business along the coast-towns of New Holland. This he declined to do, reserving the rights of his conquest to his sovereign, the Prince of Orange. But all the same the Boston traders hurriedly sent their vessels away to the conquered Province, anxious to secure the first chances of trade without paying any tribute whatever.

When, about the first of November, Capt. Aernouts sailed from Boston, he told Governor Leverett that he had left nobody to govern New Holland, and had granted no commission to any one to assume direction of its

affairs, as he would not be responsible for any one's conduct.

Nothing further was heard, in our annals at least, of Capt. Aernouts or the "Flying Horse," after the sailing away from Boston. Two of the Dutch officers however remained in Boston, who figure prominently in our story. These men were Peter Roderigo, as he is called in some of the old documents, and in John Hull's credits for military service in Philip's war, "Peter Odrigo," and Cornelis Andreson. The pilot, Capt. John Rhoad, and John Williams, a Cornishman, also remained in Boston.

These men claimed that Capt. Aernouts gave them authority before he sailed, to take possession of New Holland and govern and trade there until the proper officers for its government were sent out from the home authorities. They afterwards showed some sort of commission from Capt. Aernouts, to trade in Acadie and hold possession until superior authority should arrive.

Rhoad and his fellow-plotters purchased a ship and hired another, and fitted them with suitable armament, and with the assistance of Boston traders embarked cargoes suitable for trading in Acadie. They enlisted some half dozen Englishmen as an addition to their crew and prepared to sail eastward. But Gov. Leverett was informed, and Rhoad was sent for to explain his purpose, for doubtless those merchants whose vessels were already at the east, trading without any license, were



suspicious that this expedition was meant to interfere with them, and probably some such threats may have been made. But Rhoades declared he was only bound upon trade and holding possession of the country according to his commission, and was allowed to depart about the middle of November, 1674.

As they sailed out of Boston harbor, as near as can be estimated the expedition was organized as follows:—The larger vessel was owned in part by Thomas Mitchell, of Malden, and was called “The Edward and Thomas,” and was commanded by Peter Roderigo. The other vessel was owned by the company, by the “credit,” as it was averred, of Boston traders, but probably mostly by John Rhoades. It was designated in the appraisal, the “Penobscot Shallop,” and was commanded by Cornelis Andreson, the Dutchman. Rhoades was the pilot, and evidently the controlling spirit of the expedition. Besides these principals there were Thomas Mitchell, Peter Grant, Randolph Judson and Edward Youring, with Capt. Roderigo, the nominal commander, and Capt. Andreson, Richard Fowler (or Fulford) John Williams and John Thomas, ten in all.

The first exploit of this company was in Casco Bay, where they anchored off Munjoy’s Island, now “Peak’s Island,” and took from that island four sheep, which they dressed and carried away as booty. They arrived at Penobscot Bay about December 1st, and found the French people there still, living peaceably as they had



left them : they learned however that an English vessel had been there from Pemaquid and having abused the helpless and harmless inhabitants, had taken the iron and everything else of value from the dismantled fort, and had carried all away in their boats, together with the provisions which the Dutch had left with the French.

Sailing thence to the eastward they fell in with the vessel of Mr. Hilliard of Salem, which seeming to be engaged in unlawful trade they seized but released without injury, and warned them away from the Province. Next they came upon the vessel of William Waldron, of whom they seized the peltry as lawful prize, and with admonition to keep away, allowed him to sail homeward. The third vessel taken was that of John Feake of Boston, named "The Philip," and commanded by Capt. George Manning. The last two had been warned not to attempt to trade in Acadie, before leaving Boston.

The deposition of Capt. Manning is still preserved in the State Archives, and his case being the most aggravated because of his attempted resistance was made chief in the trial. He testified that on the 4th of December, 1674, his vessel was at anchor in "Adewake Bay," to the eastward of "Mount dezart," when the Dutch vessels came upon them. Manning was ordered aboard Roderigo's ship, and detained till a crew had been sent to search his vessel, and had taken his peltry and some other articles of trade with the Acadians ; and then



# SHIPS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY,

After an engraving on a contemporaneous Map in the possession of Mr. J. W. Farwell.



forced him to sign a paper stating that they took nothing from him but what was the growth of the country. When he refused, and demanded their commission to "search and seize," they brought out the document which Roderigo held, and which bore several great seals, but which was not read, and which probably none of them *could* read, but they did not allow Manning to try to read it. They then demanded Manning's invoice, and he went aboard his vessel to produce it. After he passed into his cabin for the paper, one of his crew, a Frenchman, James De Beck, carried him one of the guns from the deck, upon which the captors immediately seized De Beck, and beat and bound him, and carried him aboard their vessel while they discharged several shots into the cabin, wounding Manning; then threatening his life, he pleaded for mercy, and was ordered to come forth, when, as he declared, he was beaten over the head until insensible. He was then imprisoned, and the next day sentenced to be sent adrift in his boat while his vessel should be hauled ashore and burned. All were much enraged against him, and in their evidence afterwards, testified that Manning's plan was to get Roderigo into his cabin and assassinate him. He finally persuaded them to spare his life and his vessel, by his promising to keep along with them. — This was Manning's testimony.

The testimony on the other side declares that when Manning returned to his own vessel it was with the full

understanding that the action of the Dutch vessels in seizing his peltry should be submitted to the authorities in Boston, and be made a matter of settlement between the Governments of the two nations: that Manning then invited Roderigo aboard to drink with him in his cabin, where he had several pistols loaded ready to shoot him down. But one of the boys on Manning's vessel warned Roderigo of the design, whereupon he rushed in upon Manning and found the concealed weapons, and charged him with his treachery. Then returning to his own vessel to consult with his crew, suddenly, as they were standing by the rail consulting, Manning and his men suddenly appeared with leveled guns and blunderbusses, covering them at short range; the only thing that then saved them was the fact that Manning's guns "flashed in the pans," the powder being damp; so that they immediately took to their own guns and "gave them such a broadside" of shot that they at once yielded and came aboard, when the captors judged that he and his ship and goods were lawful prize; but yet they only took his peltry and goods, and would have dismissed him, but he begged so earnestly to join their expedition and act in their service that they yielded, and engaged to pay him seven pounds a month, which was his own offer.

The fourth and last English vessel captured was that owned by Major Shapleigh of Kittery, in which they found papers showing that the crew had not only traded

for peltry, but had brought provisions from the French at Port Royal (Annapolis) to relieve and reinforce the garrison of the French at Gemisic ("Gamshake"), which had surrendered to them at the former expedition, but now, aided by this English vessel, had revolted. But while they thought these things sufficient provocation to make the ship a lawful prize, the captors only took from them a supply of beef and some peltry, and sent them away.

After this the two vessels and their crews, with Manning's in company, sailed up and down the coast guarding against any outside traders, themselves monopolizing the trade. They set up a trading-station at Machias, and left it in charge of Randolph Judson and three others, but in March a vessel from Nantasket under Thomas Cole plundered and destroyed it, tearing down the Dutch flag and making prisoners of the men in charge.

In Boston, however, in the mean time, the news of the seizure of the vessels had created a stir; for although the Boston vessels had been plainly engaged in very questionable traffic in the territory of the Dutch, the authorities there were by no means satisfied to stand patiently the summary measures of Rhoades and his company. Two of the vessels seized were of Boston, and one of these, the bark "Philip," belonged to two prominent merchants, John Freake and Samuel Shrimpton; another belonged to Mr. Hilliard of Salem; another



to Major Shapleigh of Kittery, and the fourth to Mr. Waldron of Dover, on the "Pascataqua." The last was said to have sailed from Boston.

Complaint was made by John Freake of Boston, to the Governor and Council, and action was taken upon the same, and also upon complaint of Major Waldron of Dover against the piratical conduct of John Rhoades and his crew. The Governor and Council took measures at once in answer to these complaints, and on February 15th, 1674/5, "Ordered, that commission be granted for the apprehension and bringing to trial of John Rhoades and his accomplices for piracy on the high seas." This was done at Boston by the Massachusetts Council without any consultation with higher authority, or reference to either England or Holland.

John Freake recommended that Capt. Samuel Mosely be appointed to command the expedition which was to be sent out in search of the Dutch pirates. I have elsewhere investigated quite fully Capt. Mosely's character and career, on account of his prominence in Philip's war, and will only say here, that he was a dashing, daring, headstrong sort of a man, who, somewhat on account of these qualities, became the most popular officer in the subsequent war with the Indians. He married the sister of Isaac Addington, had been engaged in trade in the West Indies as captain of a merchantman, and it is said, had previously been engaged in some of the transactions of Sir Henry Morgan and his "buccaneers" against the



Dutch. He had evidently had experience of a kind to influence his choice and appointment, as commander of this expedition, besides a late command of an armed coaster near Nantucket. The Governor restrained all vessels bound east from leaving the harbor until after Capt. Mosely had sailed. A ship was speedily fitted and manned and suitably armed, and the captain received his commission and instructions. He was ordered to surprise and seize and bring the pirates to Boston forthwith.

On his way to the eastward Capt. Mosely fell in with a French vessel, which he fitted with arms and ammunition and took into his service. Rhoades and his confederates in the meantime were sailing up and down, complacently regarding themselves as the rulers of the fair province of Acadie, and accountable only to the Prince of Orange, who would presently send a force and a fleet sufficient to establish them firmly in power over the conquered land. But suddenly this dream is rudely interrupted, and an armed ship and consort, flying the English flag on the first and French colors on the latter, confront them with a peremptory demand to surrender. As soon as Capt. Manning from his vessel realized the situation he at once joined Capt. Mosely and bore down upon his late captors, while he still floated the Dutch flag. The Dutch were soon obliged to yield to superior force, after a sharp fire poured into them by the three vessels under the three different

flags. They were all made prisoners, and all their peltry and their ships and remaining goods were taken and condemned as prize property. Boston traders immediately bought the condemned goods, and at once assumed the trade which the so-called pirates had been forced to abandon.

Mosely immediately sailed with his prizes and prisoners for Boston, where he arrived April 2, 1675, and was hailed by the people as a great hero. The prisoners were closely confined. The Court of Assistants met at Cambridge on April 7th. The offenders were indicted as pirates, and imprisoned to await the action of the Court of Admiralty, specially convened to meet on the 17th of May.

While the pirates were waiting their trial in the jails at Cambridge and Boston, a very strange calamity happened in Boston harbor. On May 4th, while Mr. John Freake, the merchant who had complained of the pirates and was largely instrumental in their capture, was on board an English ship just arrived from Virginia, with Capt. Scarlett, another prominent merchant, the ship was in a strange manner blown up, and both these men with an officer of the ship were killed,\* and nine of the crew and others were seriously hurt.

On May 17th the case came on and excited widespread and intense interest. There seems to have been no thought on the part of the people or the Court that

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\* See Sewall's Diary, I: 10.

the Colonial authority of Massachusetts Bay was not amply competent to settle any affair which might arise affecting conflicting claims between England and Holland. Both these nations, as well as France, looked upon it afterwards as a piece of high-handed presumption on the part of the Massachusetts Court. But the Great and General Court never regarded it in that light, and calmly proceeded to give sentence. And when we read the names of those who composed that august body, we do not wonder at their stolid complacency : —

John Leverett, Gov. Samuel Symonds, Dept. Gov. Simon Bradstreet, Major Gookin, General Denison, Richard Russell, Thomas Danforth, William Hathorne, Simon Willard, Edward Tyng, William Stoughton and Thomas Clarke. On the jury, I notice the names which look somewhat familiar to Boston eyes :— John Sherman, Richard Willington, Richard Baker, John Long, Habakkuk Glover, Thomas Weld, and John Woodmansey. Where else, save on that bench, could such a list be found? What peerage of character, dignity and stanch purpose, to compare with theirs? They quickly condemned the ships and cargoes of the pirates as lawful prize, to be sold to indemnify costs of capture, trial, etc., and the residue to go to the heirs of Mr. Freake for injury to his vessel and trade.

The grand jury presented indictments against all the prisoners as guilty of acts of piracy on the high seas. The process was against Peter Roderigo and Cornelis

Andreson, the two Dutch officers as chiefs. The jury returned a verdict of guilty of piracy against Roderigo, and the Court sentenced him to death, but upon his humble petition for life granted a pardon. The jury's verdict of "Not guilty of piracy" in respect to Cornelis, was met by the Court with instructions to go out and find what they could against him in the matter of "theft and robbery." He, too, was pardoned, and subsequently played quite a part in the war against the Indians.

Richard Fulford (or Fowler as he gave his name), John Rhoades, Peter Grant and Randall (or Randolph) Judson, were found guilty of piracy and condemned to death, and execution was appointed to take place on July 1st following. John Thomas and John Williams were discharged acquitted, as also Thomas Mitchell and his man Yourings, who were not indicted.

The prisoners — notwithstanding the fact that the Dutchmen were poor and apparently friendless, and, with their associates (except perhaps Rhoades and Fulford) were illiterate and ignorant of English laws, — presented a very strong case, and the document containing their defence shows great ability in their counsel.

They alleged their authority and commission from the "Prince of Orange," and proved it by their commission from Aernouts ("Arnouson"). They declared that they had warned the very persons who had made complaint against them, not to attempt to trade in Acadie, and

when they had caught them violating the right of their Prince, they had simply seized their peltry as lawful prize, etc.

There was, in the time of the trial, much popular sympathy for the two Dutchmen, and even the Court was quite ready to grant their pardon, and having broken up the Dutch occupancy and practically secured the trade for the time, it is probable that the authorities were glad of a chance to pardon the others without inflicting the penalty of their sentence. Popular feeling however was greatly excited against the Englishmen who had engaged in the expedition. Rhoades, Grant and Judson were kept in prison several months and at last vanished from the Colonies, while Fulford, who was of Muscongus, was pardoned in October.

One cause of the clemency of the Court was probably the outburst of the Indian war, the news of which broke in upon the deliberation of judges and jury at the trial, and banished all other concerns. Capt. Mosely enlisted a company of volunteers and led them with the other troops out towards Mount Hope on June 24th and 25th, 1675, and in his company it is said were many of those who had been with him at the capture of the Dutch pirates, and it is supposed that Cornelis Andreson, the Dutchman, went also, as he is mentioned by several ancient writers as performing daring feats in the war, and I found a document giving him a pass which credits him with a brave action in "leading the forlorne," at

Brookfield, and also certifies his faithful service against the Indians for several months. Peter Roderigo afterwards did good service under Capt. Joshua Scottow at Blackpoint, Scarborough.

Finally let me say that in taking up this matter for this paper, I chose a topic in which I was deeply interested, and which I found that no one had ever touched upon or apparently ever noticed until Mr. Tuttle made his investigations some years ago ; and soon afterward I happened upon the papers in the State archives and have taken up the subject from another approach.

The circumstances afford many pictures which cast new light upon the manners and customs of the times. If only we could find some mystical power to flash back the camera into the dim streets of old Boston, and catch the quaint and motly group gathered about the victorious Aernouts, fresh from the conquest of Acadie, as sitting there in the dusky taproom of the old "Beaver Tavern," he issues the queer old commissions to his henchmen, Roderigo and Andreson, dictating the terms in broken English, between deep draughts from the great brown tankards of foaming ale. The quill of the ready writer (procured by Fulford or Rhoades in lieu of a typewriter) traces the slowly dictated document, till Roderigo's commission was duly "written, signed, sealed and delivered." But the hour is late, the tongue of the commander grows thick and unwieldy, the writer's hand



goes unsteadily, and the dusky old taproom fades away into shadowy Dutch somnolence, such as befell Rip Van Winkle in Sleepy Hollow. Only Rhoades and Fulford are alert; warily plucking the pen from the relaxed grasp, they hastily complete the copy and, as well as possible, set the old Captain's signature, and then, with clumsy haste use up all the seals on Roderigo's document, so that Cornelis's commission never had any seals, while Roderigo had more than enough! Whether this was the way it happened that the commission of Cornelis had a strange and insufficient appearance, or whether it was an attempt at a forged copy, we cannot know.

I would like also to take a snap-shot at the officers and crew as they sailed out to the east, and where, anchored in Casco Bay, they were replenishing their larder with the stolen sheep of George Munjoy; or again, when they stood by the rails, in their high-peaked hats, and with levelled blunderbusses threatened the destruction of the English shallop. And then I would like a picture of that sturdy old Court of Admiralty, and if by some subtle touch of phonographic power the voice of Leverett could be brought back, as he pronounced the sentence of execution designating the time as "immediately after the lecture," thus combining the culmination of law at the Great and General Court, or its equivalent, with some convenient climax of gospel at the "Great and Thursday lecture." The



sentence was never carried out, as I have said, but the failure was not from any lack of authority, but probably because in the confusion and tumult of the Indian war, all other matters were delayed and became of small moment.

But the matter did not stop with the discharge of the prisoners, for the Dutch West India Company, when informed, after several months, of the conquest, of Acadie by Capt. Aernouts, sent their messenger to Holland, and after a long time the old Dutch sloops sailing through the long months and weary leagues, brought back from Amsterdam commissions to Peter Steenwyck of New York as Governor of Acadie, and to John Rhoades, to have superintendence and monopoly of its trade. But in the meantime, report of the capture and trial of the pirates had crept across the seas, and the authorities of Holland had demanded an explanation from King Charles, and the king, in turn, had sought an explanation from the authorities at Massachusetts Bay. This letter was dated February 18, 1676, and then, when Governor Leverett and his Council got ready, which was on the fifth day of the next October, they sent a very cool and somewhat patronizing letter to King Charles, which was evidently meant to dismiss the whole question from further discussion. During this time the Boston merchants were diligently exercising their newly acquired privilege of free-trade along the Acadian coast. But John Rhoades came back to Boston

in 1676 with his commission to superintend the trade in Acadie, hired a ship of John Alden of Boston, son of the illustrious pair, John and Priscilla of Plymouth, and having formed a partnership with said Alden, Rhoades once more sailed out to the eastward, to assume the duties of his commission. But again he came to grief, since he found that during his absence the territory of Acadie had mysteriously shrunk to the east, so that now the Penobscot, instead of the Kennebec, was its western boundary, and, when he confidently sailed into the mouth of the Kennebec, he was at once attacked and overpowered by Capt. Knapton, the Massachusetts commandant at Pemaquid, himself and crew, mostly Dutch, made prisoners, his vessel and goods confiscated and all taken to New York for trial, as they had come from that jurisdiction. They were soon set at liberty, the ship restored to Alden, and again Rhoades appealed to the authority, and again the slow machinery of diplomatic correspondence moved around to the explanation of the action of the Great and General Court sitting at Boston in 1679. But the main point was gained, that Boston merchants enjoyed the monopoly of the trade to the eastward, while both Dutch and French were kept from any actual authority in the country.

It has not been my intention to draw any moral from the consideration of this topic, and it is far from my intent to speak slightly of the Great and General Court, whose "acts and resolves" seem somewhat quaint

and queer to us, but do not at all take away from our reverence and love. Those magistrates had convictions, and some of those convictions were, that New England was for the "New English"; that its dominion was to extend from the St. John's to the Hudson River; that sometime the kingdom with a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, would be established there, when Boston should be the capital, and the Court and Clergy at the capital should define and direct the righteousness!

We read much and hear much from time to time about a "Greater Boston." We are proud of its enlarged boundaries and its acquisition of beautiful suburbs. We rejoice in the radiation of its intelligence and influence to far wider suburbs than those embraced in its corporate limits. Sometimes we are apt to think all this is a modern product; but if you will just run over the deliberations and decisions of this old Court, note its answer to the complaints of the French Governor, read the tardy and complacent letter answering their king's inquiry into their conduct in this trial, and consider their quiet declaration that they acted in accordance with the "Laws of God, civilized nations, and the Colony of Massachusetts Bay," quoting evidently the three universal authorities, and then, if you ever go to the outlet of Lake Winnepesaukee, take a look at the granite boulder where two of the Magistrates of the Great Court, Endicott and Willard, drilled their initials, to

establish forever the Northern boundary line of Massachusetts;—and finally contemplate the phenomenal assurance with which they set aside the royal patents and grants to Gorges and others in Maine, and calmly assuming jurisdiction, finally attached the whole territory of the Province as a suburb of Massachusetts Bay,—you will by that time conclude that the “Greater Boston,” even of to-day, was really incarnate in that old Court of 1674/5.

Of course the two centuries have brought greater interests and a larger constituency, and we are proud of our present “Great and General Court,” when we see it grappling with the mighty problems of the day, like the restriction of the “English sparrow” or the eradication of the “Gipsy moth.” The olden Court did not have the great questions of our day to deal with, but we have seen by their way of dealing with the pirates of 1674, that they had convictions, all “home-product, Boston stamp.” Sometimes I wish that old Court could for one week deal with the Boston pirates of 1894. I feel sure that they would not import their convictions about the liquor traffic from Sweden, nor their voting methods from Australia.

It is said that “great and glorious institutions are only the lengthened shadows of great and glorious men.” Let me say of Greater Boston, incarnate in that olden Court of 1674/5,—we do not agree with those who feel called upon to vilify and belittle our Puritan

ancestry, and who represent their chief business to have been to "bristle with the porcupine quills of a fretful theology"; — nor would I, to-day, limit Greater Boston by Suffolk County, Massachusetts, or New England, but only by the lines of that newer New England stretching its bounds across the Continent, even to the far-off islands of the Pacific Sea. Along those boundaries, in every nobler institution, in every braver endeavor to vindicate human rights, in every centre of education, in every court of law, — the good and the evil, the rich and the poor, the saints as well as the pirates of every kind, I see the ever-lengthening shadow and feel the reincarnated touch of that Great and General Court of Massachusetts Bay, in Boston.



# THE STORY OF BOSTON LIGHT

BY

FITZ-HENRY SMITH, JR.

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BOSTON, MASS.





# THE STORY OF BOSTON LIGHT

With Some Account of the Beacons in Boston Harbor

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A PAPER READ TO THE BOSTONIAN SOCIETY, COUNCIL CHAMBER, OLD  
STATE HOUSE, NOVEMBER 9, 1909, WITH ADDITIONS, BY

FITZ-HENRY SMITH, JR.

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NO landmark in the harbor of Boston is more conspicuous than Boston Light. A representation of the light is the chief feature on the seal of the Town of Hull ; and the seal of The Marine Society, an old Boston institution, shows "a Ship arriving at the light House from a storm and the Sun breaking out of the Clouds." The original structure is reputed to have been the first lighthouse erected in this country, and it played a by no means unimportant part in the history of the harbor. Yet the story of the light seems to be but little known to Bostonians. This may be due to the fact that a complete and separate account has not heretofore existed, and the following paper is an

attempt to supply the deficiency and to collect and preserve the data relating to the light in serviceable form.

The placing of a lighthouse at the entrance of Boston harbor was thought of as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, as is manifest from a note in Clough's "New England Almanac" for the year 1701 :\*  
"Q. *Whether or no a Light-House at Alderton's point, may not be of great benefit to Mariners coming on these Coasts?*" But the move which finally brought about the establishment of the light did not take place until more than a decade had passed. Saturday, January 3, 1713, the petition of one John George, "merchant," in behalf of himself and associates, "Proposing the Erecting of a Light Hous & Lanthorn on some Head Land at the Entrance of the Harbour of Boston for the Direction of Ships & Veffels in the Night Time bound into the said Harbour," was read in the General Court of Massachusetts, and an order made appointing a committee, consisting of the Lieutenant-Governor (Hon. William Tailer), Eliakim Hutchinson and Andrew Belcher from the Council, and John Clark, Addington Davenport, Major Thomas Fitch, and Samuel Thaxter from the House of Representatives, to confer with Mr. George and his associates, and to report at the next session of the Court. The petition seems to have been prompted

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\* For this reference and for many helpful suggestions, the writer is indebted to Mr. John H. Edmonds of Boston.

by private enterprise. John George\* was, at the time, a selectman of the town of Boston, but subsequent events show that at the outset neither he nor his associates proceeded in an official capacity.

The committee reported March 20, that having met Mr. George and received his proposals, including a method of building and supporting the lighthouse, it was found necessary to "take a view" of the place most convenient for the erection of the structure, and that on the 13th of the month, accompanied by several of the most experienced ship-masters of Boston and Charlestown, they went down to the outermost islands at the entrance of the harbor. They landed upon and surveyed several of these islands, and, backed by the unanimous opinion of the ship-masters who went down with them, recommended; "That the Southermost Part of the Great Brewster called Beacon Island is the

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\* John George was a person of some prominence; he was a Selectman in 1701 as well as in 1713, and a member of the committee of thirty-one chosen in 1708 to formulate a scheme for the better government of the town. His firm, John George & Co., appears among the list of "merchants and traders" who in 1700-01 petitioned the Governor for a bankrupt law "as in England," and he individually was one of the backers of the Long Wharf project. He died November 24, 1714, leaving a will by which he divided his "part in the long Wharff and Warehouse thereon" and his interest in the partnership with his son-in-law (Nathan Howell) between his wife Lydia, and his daughter Katherine Howell. July 5, 1715, his widow married the Rev. Dr. Cotton Mather. Sewall wrote that "Mr. George laid in my Tomb till Madam George have an opportunity to build one," and that he "Was a Well-accomplish'd Merchant and appears to have been a good Chriftian, defirable, usefull Man."

most convenient Place for the Erecting a Light House, which will be of great Use not only for the Preservation of the Lives & Estates of Persons designing for the Harbour of Boston & Charlestown but of any other Place within the Massachusetts Bay," as Boston Bay was then called. Whereupon it was resolved by both Houses of the Court "that the Projection will be of general publick Benefit & Service & is worthy to be encouraged," and the committee was directed to proceed to receive the proposals and offers of persons to undertake the work, "and upon what Terms or Encouragement to be given by the Government in Laying a Duty of Tunnage upon Shipping."

Meanwhile the selectmen of Boston seem to have awakened to the fact that the project was one which might be turned to the account of the town, and on March 2, 1713, they "Agreed to propose to y<sup>e</sup> Town their being concerned in y<sup>e</sup> charge of a Light House in ord<sup>r</sup> to an income." March 9, at a meeting of "Freeholders and other inhabitants of y<sup>e</sup> town of Boston," held at the South Meeting House, it was voted, "that the consideration of what is proper for the Town to do Ab<sup>t</sup>. a Light-Hous be referred to the Select men and Committee afore appointed to Improve the fifteen hundred pounds."\* And May 13 the town voted that in case the Court should see cause to proceed to the establishment of a lighthouse, the selectmen or representatives

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\* "The produce of y<sup>e</sup> Blue-Hill Lands."

of the town be desired to move the Court that the town of Boston as a town have the preference in the charge of erecting and maintaining the lighthouse, "and being Intituled to the Proffits and Incomes thereof."

The committee of the General Court reported that they gave public notice of the time and place for receiving proposals; had received a further proposal from Mr. George, and had heard several times from the selectmen of Boston and "a Committee for their free Grammar Schools," relating to the desire of the town for preference in the matter of the light before any particular individuals.

After the report was read it was voted, June 2, 1713, that the lighthouse "be erected at the Charge of the Province, if this Court see meet; If not the Town of Boston to have the Preference before any private Person or Company." June 9 the selectmen of Boston took action whereby the representatives of the town in the General Court were desired to move the Court in the interest of the town "after y<sup>e</sup> rules of duty for Light money" were stated. The report of the committee on the question of the duties to be assessed for the support of the lighthouse in case it should be erected, was made on June 17, 1713, and for a period of more than a year thereafter progress on the project was halted.\* But on

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\* August 4, 1713, the selectmen appointed a committee to procure a draft of an Act, to be presented to the General Court, relating to the erection and maintenance of the lighthouse by the town of Boston.



November 5, 1714, and again on June 9, 1715, the Court passed the following order: "That a Light House be Erected at the Charge of this Province at the Entrance of the Harbour of Boston on the same Place & Rates proposed in Bill, projected for the Town of Boston's Doing it, Accompanying this Vote, And that a Bill be drawn accordingly."

This vote finally disposed of the part which the town of Boston hoped to take in the enterprise, and which seems to have been the cause of the delay. A few days later (June 14) a committee\* was appointed to erect the lighthouse pursuant to the votes of the General Court, and on July 23, 1715, a bill was passed entitled "An Act for Building and Maintaining a Light House upon the Great Brewster, called Beacon Island at the Entrance of the Harbour of Boston," the reason for the Act, as stated in the preamble, being that the want of such a lighthouse, "hath been a great Discouragement to Navigation by the loss of the Lives and Estates of Several of His Majesties Subjects."

The Act provided for the erection of a lighthouse on "the South-ermost part of the Great Brewster called Beacon Island . . . . at the charge of the Province . . . . to be kept lighted from Sun setting to Sun rising," and decreed that from and after the completion of the structure "and kindling a light in it usefull for Ship-

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\* The members were William Payne, Col. Samuel Thaxter, Col. Adam Winthrop, Addington Davenport, and the Hon. William Tailer.

ping" . . . . there should "be paid to the receiver of Impoft by the Master of all Ships and Veffells Except Coafters the Duty of one penny per Tun Inwards and alfo one penny per Tun outwards and no more for every Tun of the burthen of faid Veffell before they load or unlade the Goods therein." Fishing vessels and vessels engaged in bringing lumber, stone, etc., from ports within the Province were required to pay but five shillings a year, and the Act expreffly defined the meaning of the word "coasters," provided for the measurement of vessels and the collection of the tax, and stated that a person should be appointed from time to time "by the General Court or Assembly" to be the keeper of the light. For a failure to attend his duties the keeper was made liable to a fine not to exceed £100, two-thirds of which was to go to the Government and the balance to the informer. At the same time, by a Resolve, £500 was allowed "for a present Supply" to the cost of building the lighthouse, and the committee was empowered to trade with the owners of Beacon Island for its purchase.

Accordingly Col. Samuel Thaxter, in behalf of the committee, appeared before the proprietors of the town of Hull, the owners of the Brewsters, at a meeting of the proprietors held on the 1st of August, 1715: and the proprietors "being cenfable" that the proposed lighthouse would be of general benefit to trade and that they in particular would "rape a greate benefite there-



by," by unanimous vote "granted the fd. Bacan Island to the pruinice of the Massatuffets Bay for the use of a light house foreuer," to be disposed of as the Government should see fit; but with the provision that the grantors should be kept harmless.

December 20, 1715, the Court granted a further £500 toward the undertaking, and on the same day appointed Mr. William Payne\* and Captain Zechariah Tuthill† as overseers to carry on and finish the work under the direction of the committee, the committee "not having Leifure to attend that Work." In all, £1900 was granted by the Court for the purpose, and on November 29, 1716, the report of the committee showing a balance of £485:7:8 remaining due was accepted and this amount ordered to be paid out of the public treasury, thus making the total cost of the structure £2385:17:8. Previously (June 25, 1716) the committee had been desired to procure a suitable person to keep the light, and his salary for the first year fixed at £50, "to begin when the Lights are sett & kept up." In the "Boston News Letter" of September 17, 1716, it is said that the "Light House has been built; And on

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\* Born January 22, 1668; died June 10, 1735. Commissioner of Impost 1698, Collector 1699 to 1710, Selectman of Boston 1713, Sheriff of Suffolk County 1714 and 1715, Representative from Boston in the General Court 1715 and 1716, Excise Commissioner 1716.

† Captain of the Castle and one of the founders of the Brattle Street Church. As compensation for their trouble it was provided that the overseers should have £60 when the lighthouse was completed.

Fryday laſt the 14th Currant the Light was kindled.” When it is conſidered that the firſt Eddystone light-house, which took four years to build, was not begun until 1696, and that the celebrated Tour de Corduan at the mouth of the river Garonne, although a long time in building, was not completed until 1610, it will be realized that in addition to being the firſt erected in this country, Boston Light is alſo one of the oldeſt of the famous lighthouses of the modern world, and the two hundredth anniversary of its eſtabliſhment is faſt approaching.

The dimensions of the lighthouse are not given us, but to judge from an early picture it was a tall and ſtately ſtructure. The tower at leaſt ſeems to have been built of ſtone, evidenced by the reports of various committees on the repair of the lighthouse, and in particular by the report of the committee appointed to examine the building after the great ſtorm in February, 1723. The committee reported June 18, 1723, in part as follows :—

We Likewiſe Examind the Light Houſe & Searched into the Severall Cracks in the Stone Wall, but Cannot be of opinion that they are in the leaſt Meaſure Occaſioned by the Late Storm, and Rather becauſe the Cracks are much Wider on the Inſide than on the Out, & many that appear within do not go through the Walls, which were likely to be Occaſioned by ye Fire when part of the Light Houſe was burnt, For if the Storm of Wind & Water had hurt the Building, the Damage would appear on the out Side, where the Force Came, Neither Can wee perceive any of the Stones diſplaced.

That "part of the Great Brewster called Beacon Island" on which the lighthouse was erected is, in effect, a separate island joined to the Great Brewster by a bar. How and when it came to be called "Beacon Island" is puzzling. Before 1715 it was also known as the Little Brewster, though that name appears on some maps made earlier, as well as later, for the island now designated as the Outer Brewster. Since the establishment of the light the island has generally been called the Light House Island, and it so appears on the present Government charts of the harbor.

Previous to the erection of the lighthouse, beacons had been placed on the heights in and about Boston for the purpose of giving alarm in the case of the approach of a supposed enemy. The beacon on Sentry Hill in Boston, which has given to the hill the name so familiar to Bostonians, was established as the result of an order of the General Court passed in March, 1635. Such a beacon may have been set up on the Little Brewster, but it would not seem likely, in view of the low elevation of the island and the distance from the mainland. We know that as early as 1673 there was a beacon on Point Allerton at the entrance of the harbor, for on March 9, 1674, the selectmen of Hull petitioned the General Court that some consideration might be allowed them in their rate for the past year for their "charge and trouble about the fetting up and wardinge off the Beacon erected on Poynt Allerton By order off the

Honoured Counsell.” And Nathaniel Bosworth of Hull filed an account of the expenses to which the town had been about the beacon, with a list of the persons who had warded the same.

In May, 1678, Captain James Oliver was ordered by the Council to repair to Hull and to live there, in order that a ward might be kept daily on the *island* where the beacon is, “espying fower ships together to be Approaching to give an Alarum by firing the Beacon.” The use of the word “island” in this order does not necessarily mean that the beacon was situated on one of the Brewsters Nor does it exclude Point Allerton. “Island,” as a term, is sometimes used loosely in the records of this period, and we have other documentary evidence showing that the beacon was in fact on the main land.

In 1679-80 two Dutchmen, Jaspar Dankers and Peter Sluyter, made a voyage from Holland to New York, and on their way home stopped at Boston. Dankers wrote a Journal of the trip in which the approach to Boston is described as follows: “There are many small islands before Boston, well on to fifty, I believe, between which you sail on to the city. A high one, or the highest, is the first that you meet. It is twelve miles from the city and has a light-house upon it which you can see from a great distance, for it is in other respects naked and bare.” Although the words “light house” are used in the translation quoted, there is no

doubt that what the voyagers saw was a beacon, for the narrator states later on, "there is a high hill in the city also with a light-house upon it." And that this beacon was stationed on Point Allerton appears from the description given of the course to the city. Says the Journal: "In sailing by this island [the one with the beacon] you keep it on the west side; on the other side there is an island with many rocks upon and around it, and when you pass by it you must be careful, as a shoal pushes out from it which you must sail round." The rocky island with the shoal exactly describes the Brewsters, and a ship entering Boston Harbor has Point Allerton to the west. The beacon of 1673 was erected at Point Allerton, and judging from a petition of Benjamin Bosworth on whose land it stood, was set up under the supervision of Captain Oliver. Further, Point Allerton was but a short distance from the village of Hull, lying in the valley between the hills to the west, and where the captain was most likely to take up his residence.

Finally, it may be said, that in 1689 the inhabitants of Hull were exempted from impressment to public service upon certain conditions, among them that of "Erecting a Beacon at Alderton point for to make a Signal of the approach of Ships. If more than three together to give Notice." And FitzHugh's copy, so-called, of Captain Southake's Map of the Harbor\* shows

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\* See Publications of the Bostonian Society, II: 110.

a beacon at Point Allerton, the hill there being designated as "Beacon Hill." Sewall refers to the firing of "Nantasket Beacon" in 1696.

These orders as to beacons were of a precautionary or defensive nature and were not passed in the interests of navigation, as was the vote for the erection of a lighthouse. In January, 1680-81, the Council authorized the payment to the town of Hull of eight pounds or its equivalent, for an acre of land "upon the top or highest part of the Great Islands amongst the Islands Called Brewsters Islands," which had been appraised by a committee of the Court and reserved for a "Generall sea marke" for the public use. If the Little Brewster got to be called Beacon Island because of a structure erected upon it, that structure was in all probability nothing more than a nautical beacon or sea-mark without a light; but no one of the early maps of the harbor that we have seen shows anything of the sort on either the Great or the Little Brewster.

The system of warning the country by means of beacons continued to be employed after the lighthouse was built; and when there was danger approaching by sea the signal was given from the lighthouse island. Thus Daniel Neal says, writing in 1719:—

To prevent any possible Surprise from an Enemy, there is a Light-House built on a Rock, appearing above Water about two long Leagues from the Town, which in Time of War makes a Signal to the Castle, and the Castle to the Town by hoisting and



lowering the Union-Flag, so many Times as there are Ships approaching, which if they exceed a certain Number, the Castle fires three Guns to alarm the Town of *Boston*, and the Governour, if Need be, orders a *Beacon* to be fired, which alarms all the adjacent Country; so that unless an Enemy can be supposed to sail by so many Islands and Rocks in a Fog, the Town of *Boston* must have six or more Hours to prepare for their Reception.

And Bennett's narrative describes a similar scheme as in use in 1740:—

About two leagues distant from the Castle on a rock, stands an exceeding fine light-house, at which there is a guard constantly attending to prevent surprize; from whence they make signals to the Castle when any ships come in sight, whether friend or foe . . . . when a signal is made from off the light-house to the Castle of the approach of an Enemy if there be more than four or five ships then the Castle thereupon gives a signal to the town; and those of the town alarm the country by firing a Beacon. And for that purpose they have a very famous one on the north west side of the town erected on a hill.

When the Lighthouse Act was passed, one Thomas Coram\* made objections to the Act as laying a tax

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\* He was undoubtedly the Captain Thomas Coram who established the Foundling Hospital in London. Born in 1668, the son of a sea-captain, Coram was first a sailor and then a ship-builder. In 1693 he came to Boston under the protection of the British Government, "to promote and carry on" in the Province the business of ship-building for the account of Thomas Hunt and other merchants of London. After four or five years he moved to Taunton and set up a ship-yard in what is now South Dighton, where he seems to have constructed a

upon shipping and making no provisions for pilots, who were much needed — going so far as to submit the matter to the Lords of the Admiralty, by whom he was referred to his Majesty's Commissioners for Trade and Plantations. The latter desired him to put his objections in writing, but apparently nothing came of them, for the Province proceeded unmolested in the erection and maintenance of the lighthouse. The pilotage question, though in a different form, was, however, subsequently raised by three of the lighthouse keepers: and Coram was right in suggesting that some attention be paid to the matter of pilots, though not, perhaps, in objecting to the Lighthouse Act on that account.

In July, 1719, the keeper petitioned the General Court that a gallery be built on the seaward side of the lighthouse, "that he may be able to come to the Glaſs to clear off the Ice & Snow in the Winter Time,

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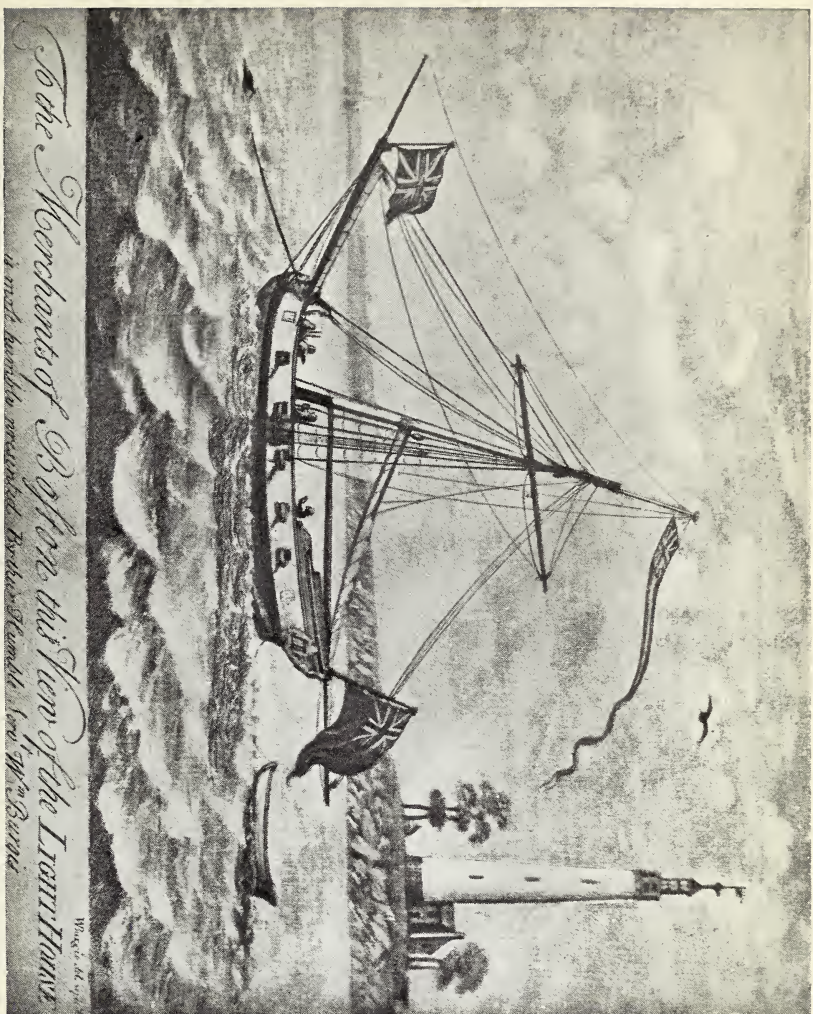
number of vessels. But he did not get along well with his new neighbors. "Of a rather choleric disposition," Coram "spoke what he thought with vehemence" and was a frequent litigant. He accused the magistrates of Bristol County of rendering illegal judgments against him, and all of these judgments were reversed on appeal. In 1703 he returned to England. The blame for his "persecution" at Taunton Coram laid to Nathaniel Byfield, and used all his influence to prevent Byfield from being made Governor of the Province in 1715, "or so much as Judge of the Admiralty again in New England." June 27, 1700, Coram married at Boston, Eunice, daughter of John and Eunice Wait. She died in 1740, and his death occurred March 29, 1751. See the paper by Hamilton A. Hill on "*Thomas Coram in Boston and Taunton*," American Antiquarian Society Proceedings, VIII: 133, for reference to which I am indebted to Dr. S. A. Green of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

whereby the Said Light is much obscured & that a great Gun be placed on Said Island to answer Ships in a Fog." The Court voted him the gun and appointed a committee to see about the other matter ; but a gallery was sometime thereafter added to the lighthouse. There is a picture of the lighthouse done by William Burgis in 1729, and dedicated to the Merchants of Boston, which is said to have been the second mezzotint made in this country. It shows the fog gun\* and gives a very good idea of the lighthouse as first erected. A print of this picture was presented to the U. S. Light-house Board by Lieut. C. H. West, U. S. N., and is now owned by the Bureau of Light-Houses at Washington.

In the foreground is a single-masted armed vessel, which has been referred to as the "Province Sloop," as "An Armed British Customs Pinnace," and as "The Light-House Tender." A vessel described as the "Province Boat, which attends the service" of the lighthouse, is referred to in various petitions of Robert Ball, the third lighthouse keeper. But it is doubtful if this was an armed vessel, or so large as the sloop in the picture. The lighthouse boat figures frequently in the history of the light. It was often in need of repairs and new fittings, was lost and found at least once, and was once stolen. We may get some idea of the size of the tender from the fact that in 1734 the lighthouse

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\* The gun appears to have been one belonging to the Province and previously located at Long Island.



*To the Merchants of Boston this View of the Light House  
is most humbly presented by the Steamship "The Boston"*

*W. A. G. 1847*

# BOSTON LIGHT.

From the Original Mezzotint, Engraved in 1729.





keeper asked the Court for a new one "of thirty feet by the keel."

Repairs to the lighthouse were necessary from time to time, and in 1726 £490: 1: 8 was expended upon the plant at Beacon Island, including the wharf and buildings there. The need of more extensive repairs then became evident, with the result that in June, 1734, a committee was appointed by the General Court to ascertain if the lighthouse was capable of being repaired, and if not, whether "a more Convenient place and a better foundation for Erecting the Lighthouse on then the place where the present house stands," could be found, and whether it was proper to build it of timber or of stone. Thursday, July 4, the committee reported, advising "that the Seams & Cracks be well filled with mortar or Putty, and the whole outside cas'd with Good oak Plank of two Inches and a half thick up and down, with twelve Iron hoops, the Hoops to be three Inches and a half wide,  $\frac{5}{8}$  of an Inch thick, well drove over the Plank and to be at Suitable distances about four feet apart, and boarded between the Hoops and Shingled on the outside." "This method," says the committee, "we apprehend will Secure the said Light house and make it as Strong as at first if not the better: And herein we have the opinion of Workmen going down with us, the foundation of the House not being in least altered nor the House Settled one way or other, having Carefully plumb'd it all Round." The cost of these repairs the



committee thought would not exceed five hundred and fifty pounds—much less than the expense of tearing down and building anew. From this report it would seem evident that the structure, apart from the lantern, must have been at least fifty feet in height.

The report of the committee was accepted and the duty on shipping and navigation increased for the next four years to three halfpence per ton, to meet the charge of repairs, which another committee was designated to effect “after the most prudent manner.” February 3, 1737, this committee addressed a memorial to the Court, stating that they had completed the repairs to the lighthouse and dwelling house and had built a new and very commodious wharf. They were granted for their services £150 “in the new tenor.”

In 1738 a committee recommended that the lighthouse be painted white, and we infer that this was done from the fact that the keeper communicated to the Legislature in June, 1749, that the building required attention, “the Paint being all wash’d off which renders it less visible to Vessels bound in in the Day Time than it would be if the Paint was fresh.” Whereupon another coat was ordered.

Not only were repairs necessary by reason of the ordinary wear and tear on such a structure, but it suffered also from other causes. January 13, 1720,—that is, a little more than three years after the light went into operation—a fire occurred at the lighthouse. The

Council immediately directed that an advertisement of the fact be put in the newspapers, and provided for the setting up of as good a light as could "conveniently be projected" until the building should be repaired. The fire was not serious enough to place the light out of commission for any length of time, for we learn from a second notice in the newspapers that on February 17 the repairs were completed and the lights burning as before.\* The Council seemed to think, however, that some blame for the accident attached to the keeper, and they held back the salary due him on February 8, awaiting his explanation. February 25 the keeper, Capt. John Hayes, presented a Memorial in which he accounted for the fire as follows:

That it being the Memorialists manner to go to bed early in ye evening & rife about nine o'clock at night, about eight o'clock he was waked out of his sleep by his wife, who told him she suspected ye Light House was a fire, that he immediately ran up with two pails of water but ye fire was too violent to be subdued, that however he saved many things belonging to the Light House. That he supposes ye fire was occasioned by ye Lamps dropping on ye wooden Benches & a snuff falling off & setting fire & that ye said fire was not occasioned by ye least neglect of ye Memorialist.

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\* It cost the Province £221 : 16 : 1 to make good the damages which the fire had done, and then on the recommendation of the committee appointed to attend to the matter that "some further work" was necessary, the Council ordered the committee to proceed with it, referring this time to the stairs in the lighthouse in particular. The bill for these additional repairs amounted to £196 : 11 : 6, but included the cost of transferring to Beacon Island the "great gun" to which reference has been made.

After the Memorial was read, the Council called the keeper before them and asked him several questions. They were apparently satisfied with his answers, for when he had withdrawn they voted him his salary.

While the method adopted in 1734 of repairing the tower by means of a wooden casing was temporarily cheaper, it rendered the building even more liable to damage by fire. As might be expected, when a fire next occurred, as in 1751, it very nearly destroyed the structure. This took place during a recess of the General Court, and without waiting for the opening of Court, Spencer Phips, the Acting Governor, appointed a body to examine the lighthouse and make such repairs as might be needed for the safety of navigation. It was found that while the wooden parts of the lighthouse were destroyed, including the several floors and the stairs leading to the lantern, the walls of the building were not much injured, except that the fire had caused the stones to "slake" off about two inches deep, which it was thought might be remedied by hammering off what was loose. Meanwhile it was suggested that a light be shown from a spar about forty feet high, to be raised to the eastward of the lighthouse. New floors and steps were then constructed and a temporary light displayed from a ship's lantern.

The committee appointed for the repair of the lighthouse after the General Court convened, recommended, to guard against fire in the future, that an arch be

turned over the top of the tower (presumably of brick as recommended by the Governor's committee) through which an entrance be left into the lantern, the door of this entrance to be of thin iron plates, the frame of the lantern of iron, and the roof of copper. Previously the lantern had doubtless been constructed of wood, except possibly the roof, which William Payne as early as 1717 suggested be covered with lead as a protection against the weather. The committee further recommended that the outside be planked, hooped, shingled and painted as before, but suggested that to protect the lantern the walk around it be laid with "Connecticut stone" projecting about four inches beyond the sides of the building, and that for greater security the windows be stopped up or made narrower. These repairs were consummated at an outlay, so far as the records show, of £1170, including £20 allowed the keeper for work done by him, and an Act was passed imposing higher lighthouse duties for the space of two years.

In an article on the lighthouse in the "Massachusetts Magazine" for February of 1789, it was said that the building "was several times struck with lightning, and attempts were made to erect conductors; but this measure was opposed by several of the godly men of those days, who thought it vanity and irreligion for the arm of flesh to presume to avert the stroke of Heaven. But it having received considerable damage, in the course of two or three successive summers, necessity prevailed

over the consciences of our faithful fathers, and the invention of Franklin was employed, since which, it has received no injury from that cause."

Repairs were made from time to time to the dwelling house on the island, and also to the wharves there, which were frequently damaged by storms. And in 1773 preparations seem again to have been made for repairs to the lighthouse itself. Then came the Revolution, and during the Revolution the lighthouse fared hard. The occupation of Boston by the British began in June, 1774, soon after the arrival of Gage as Governor and Captain General, and apparently they took possession of the lighthouse, though just when we do not know, and guarded it. In any event the light passed out of the control of the Province, and after the battle of Bunker Hill became an object of attack. Early in July following the battle, the Provincial Congress, taking into consideration the fact that the light had become useless to the Province because of the harbor's "being blocked up by ships of war," endeavored to find some means of removing the lamps and oil. This resulted simply in the matter being passed from one committee to another, and nothing accomplished. But later in the month the object was brought about in a somewhat startling manner.

The exposed condition of the town of Hull and the danger that British sympathizers might find a means of communicating with the ships of the enemy if precau-



tions were not taken, led to an order in July, 1775, directing the inhabitants of Hull to remove therefrom and providing for a guard to be stationed at the entrance of Nantasket Beach. This order was readily complied with, if not anticipated, by the townspeople, and the little hamlet left deserted except for the family of Lieut. Wm. Haswell, an English half-pay officer in the Revenue Service. So hurried was the exodus from Hull, however, that the grain was left standing in the fields, although the Provincial Congress, in response to a petition of the Hullonians setting forth their dangerous situation, had ordered the selectmen and committee of correspondence of the town of Hingham and District of Cohasset to assist in the work of removal. But on July 20 a detachment under Major Vose of Heath's regiment went down to Hull, where they landed and cut the standing grain. Then they went over to the lighthouse island, took away the lamps and oil, some gunpowder, and the boats there, and "burned the wooden parts of the lighthouse." Although they were engaged by an armed schooner and several boats, in which engagement two of the Americans were wounded, they got away with all their booty, including 1000 bushels of barley and a quantity of hay. Writing of this affair an English officer remarked that it would "prove of great detriment to the shipping," thus indicating that the light was serviceable to the British, if not to the Continentals. Says an American eye-witness quoted



by Frothingham in his "Siege of Boston," "I ascended an eminence at a distance and saw the flames of the light-house ascending up to heaven like grateful incense, and the ships wasting their powder."

The British at once began the reconstruction of the lighthouse with a force of carpenters, guarded by marines. In consequence, a command of three hundred men under Major Tupper was detached from the American army with orders to stop the work, and on July 31, during the progress of a heavy cannonade at Boston, they set out in whale boats from Dorchester and Squantum for the lighthouse. Planting a field piece under Major Crane on Nantasket Head to cover a retreat, they landed on the island, overcame the guard, killing ten or twelve outright and making the rest prisoners, and destroyed the buildings which were being erected. On the return they were hotly pursued by the British, but escaped with the loss of one killed, while one of the pursuing boats was sunk by a shot from Major Crane's gun, with fatal results. A wounded British prisoner was left by Major Tupper at Hull, where he died soon after and was buried in a corner of Lieutenant Haswell's garden. The story of the death of this young Englishman is told in sentimental style in a novel — "Rebecca" — written by the Lieutenant's daughter, Mrs. Susanna Rowson, famous in her day as actress, school-teacher and novelist, and in particular as the author of "Charlotte Temple," perhaps the most

popular novel of its time.\* These bold undertakings of the Continentals caused Col. Barré to exclaim in Parliament, "They burn even the lighthouse under the nose of the fleet, and carry off the men sent to repair it." Major Vose gained much credit by his success, and Washington, in general orders, thanked Major Tupper and the officers and men under his command "for their gallant and soldier-like behavior."

While it is apparent that the light was maintained by the British during their occupation of the harbor, though perhaps not with regularity, we do not know who the keeper was. The first keeper of the lighthouse was George Worthylake, who was appointed in 1716 and who lived at the time of his appointment, according to Dr. Shurtleff, upon Lovell's Island, his father having been a resident of George's Island. It does not appear how Worthylake came to be selected, but doubtless the fact of his long residence on the islands near the Brewsters had a great deal to do with it. March 5, 1716, the town of Hull, in which town it must be remembered the Brewsters are located, appointed a committee to petition the Court for the liberty of choosing the man

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\* The scene of "Rebecca" is laid, in part, at Hull, and Mrs. Rowson wrote of an event which she witnessed as a girl of thirteen. For her life see the "Memoir" by Elias Nason, Albany, N. Y., 1870. The Bostonian Society owns a Map of Boston Harbor worked in silk by Lydia Withington at Mrs. Rowson's School in Boston, June 30, 1799. A reprint of the first American edition of "Charlotte Temple" with cuts and an historical introduction and bibliography was published by Funk & Wagnalls in 1905. Copies of "Rebecca" are very rare.

to keep the lighthouse. The authority to make the selection was, however, vested by the Court in the lighthouse committee, as has been noted, but Worthyake may have been Hull's man.

Worthyake's salary, as originally fixed, was fifty pounds per annum, but was increased to seventy pounds in 1717, on his petition. November 3, 1718, he was unfortunately drowned, together with his wife and daughter, and all three were buried in Copp's Hill Burial Ground. The accident was made the subject of a ballad by Benjamin Franklin, then a lad of thirteen, called "The Light House Tragedy," which his brother induced him to print, and which he sold on the streets of Boston. But although the ballad "sold wonderfully," as Franklin tells us in his Autobiography, "the event being recent" and "having made a great noise," not a copy is known to be in existence, nor do we know anything about the ballad, with the exception of its author's description that it was "wretched stuff, in the Grub-street-ballad style."

Three days after the tragedy, the Council directed Mr. Robert Saunders "to repair to Beacon Island & take care of the Light House till a keeper be chosen & appointed by the General Assembly." The same day the merchants of Boston recommended for the position, as an experienced mariner and pilot, Capt. John Hayes. Hayes was appointed keeper by a vote of the Court Nov 18, but seems to have taken up his duties before

that date, for his salary was figured from the 8th of the month. So the term of Saunders if he served at all was a very short one, and he never was the official keeper of the light, inasmuch as the Lighthouse Act especially provided that the keeper should be appointed by the General Assembly.\*

As in Mr. Worthylake's case, Hayes' salary was originally fixed at fifty pounds, to be paid quarterly, but was raised in 1720 to seventy pounds, upon his showing the necessity of two men besides himself for the proper care of the light. An interesting feature of this petition is the keeper's statement that "in as much as it may

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\* Dec. 3, 1718, one Mary Saunders presented a "charge about the Light House," and was allowed £5:15. Dec. 15 of the same year "Mary Sanders, widow," took out administration on the estate of "Robert Sanders, late of Boston, mariner."

The following news item in "The New England Weekly Journal" of Monday, March 24, 1735, given me by Mr. Edmonds, shows how narrowly another Worthylake escaped the fate of the first keeper:—

"Laft Tuefday Evening between 7 and 8 o'Clock we had a sudden violent Guft of Wind, the Light-Houfe Boat being then between the Long-Wharff and the Caſtle going down, the water beat fo over her Stern that ſhe filled and ſank; there was on board Mr. *Ball* keeper of the Light-Houfe, Capt. *Bullney* Commander of a veſſel bound out lying at *Nantaſket*, Mr. *Worthylake*, and one *Kericane*, a Porter of this Town; they would in all probability have all loſt their Lives, but having providentially a ſmall Boat belonging to Captain Bullney's veſſel in tow, Mr. *Ball* tho' he could not ſwim, accidentally getting hold of the Painter, with much Difficulty got along by it into the ſmall Boat, and made up to Capt. *Bullney* and took him in, after he had funk once; Mr. *Worthylake* alſo juſt made ſhift to get into the ſaid Boat; *Kericane*, who ſeem'd to be in great Conſternation, remain'd where he was, and was drowned the other three in the ſmall Boat in about an Hour after, got ſafe to Governours Iſland, tho' much ſpent and benumb'd with the Cold."

have been represented, that his Profits are considerable by Giving Entertainment on the Island, That he has found the same prejudicial to himself, as well as the Town of Boston, and therefore has left off giving Entertainment for the last twelve Months." Four years later an addition of £15 was made to Hayes' salary, and his allowance as keeper continued to be £85 for the remainder of his period of service. August 22, 1733, he gave notice of his desire to resign on November 8th, the end of his official year, and at the same time a memorial was presented by the merchants of Boston, recommending Robert Ball as keeper, and Ball was appointed to succeed Capt. Hayes.

Robert Ball kept the lighthouse until 1774, and, so far as appears, was the official Provincial keeper at the time of his death, October 10 of that year. The last Act of the General Court in reference to Boston Light during the year 1774 was passed in the month of February, and dealt with Mr. Ball's salary for the previous year. June 17 the Court adjourned with a "God save the King." When the delegates met again in the following October, they convened at Salem, as the First Provincial Congress, and the Journals of the Provincial Congresses contain no references to the lighthouse keeper. Ball was seventy-five years old when he died, and in his last petition for his salary stated that on November 19, 1773, he had completed his fortieth year as keeper of the light, — the longest term of service in



its history. Whether he remained the actual keeper up to the date of his death may be questioned. The fact that he made his will just two months before he died is significant: and further, it would seem safe to assume that British jurisdiction over the light must have been exercised previous to October, 1774.

If there were any period before the death of Ball and before the lighthouse was seized by the British, when some other person kept the light for the Province, that person was in all probability Ball's nephew, William Minns, for Minns seems to have assisted at the lighthouse as early as 1770. If the light were maintained by the British while they remained in control of the harbor, the keeper was most likely a Tory or some member of the British force.

Ball was keeper in 1751, when the light was burned the second time, and during his long and faithful service was a witness to many of the improvements and changes that have been noted. In 1739, six years after he took charge, he petitioned the General Court to be appointed the established pilot of the harbor, or at least have the preference over all other persons, reciting in his petition that he had so acquainted himself with the harbor that he was able to take in the largest vessels; that he had two young men with him whom he had trained to be capable pilots, and that there were always two well-fitted boats at the lighthouse. He further set out that he piloted vessels in the winter time and charged no



more than in the summer season, and that he had frequently been obliged to go on board vessels infected with the small-pox, to pilot them to the Province Hospital. Owing to the dangers which he thus ran he thought that he was "in some measure Entitled to the more easy & profitable part of pilotage in the summer season"; but stated that in the summer time small craft would go out into the bay a considerable distance and, unfairly, as he thought, take the pilotage business away from him. In an earlier petition Capt. Hayes had made a similar complaint, explaining that during the summer almost every fisherman or boatman would act as pilot, to his detriment.

The House of Representatives was disposed to accede to Ball's request, but the Council amended the Act passed below by directing the petitioner to bring in a bill, and Ball apparently did not see fit to call the matter up again, or at least to ask to be made the exclusive pilot of the harbor.\*

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\* The order of the House appointed Ball the "established" pilot of the harbor of Boston for three years, fixed a maximum for his charges, and made elaborate provision in his behalf. He was to keep two well-fitted boats and distinguish them from all others "by having them Painted white down to the Wale." In addition the boat plying "in the Bay" was to fly "a broad blew Vane" at the mast head and the boat plying in the harbor "a broad red Vane." Any person presuming to imitate these distinguishing features was made liable to a fine of £5, to be recovered by Ball for his own use, and if he, or his agent, went on board a vessel before she got by the lighthouse and found another person in charge of her as pilot, Ball could claim half the fees.

Ball was not given a fixed salary like his predecessors, with the result that at the end of every year he petitioned the Legislature for an allowance for his services and for his disbursements on account of the light. He was first allowed for services the sum of £120. In 1741 his allowance was £130 "old tenor." The next year we find it £32:10, doubtless, though not so stated, because payable in the "new tenor" bills of 1737, which the Government valued at the rate of one new for three of the old and which, it is said, the people passed at the rate of one for four. But whatever the currency, and notwithstanding a subsequent increase of ten pounds, the allowance was not satisfactory, and in 1747 Ball informed the Court that his pay was "not Equivalent to his time, care and trouble in Attending the Light," stating that while the light constantly required two persons, he attended it alone "with his Servant or Negro."\* This devotion to his duty, he declared, prevented him from pursuing any other business which could be made more advantageous to himself and his family. And he asserted that his complaint was just, "Inasmuch as the Price of all the Neccessarys of Life are now vastly raised, and the Bills of Credit greatly Depreciated," — a note which has a familiar sound to-day. That Ball was then not alone in his trouble appears from a vote of the Court in March,

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\* In the inventory of Ball's estate is the item: "1 negro man Jack £6. 13. 4."

1748, "*strongly recommending* to the severall Churches and Congregations within this Province to make an honourable provision for the Support of their Ministers proportionate to the great Rise of the Necessaries of Life since their settlement ;" and reference to the "dearness of Provisions" was made when the Court increased the Captain's salary, as keeper, twenty-four years earlier.

As a result of his petition Ball's allowance was raised to £57: 10, but this he did not think enough, and in successive petitions stated that he could not help setting forth the insufficiency of the amount allowed him, referring, as before, to "the dear price of all necessaries of Life," the hardships and risks he was obliged to undergo in the winter time, and the small amount he was able to realize in his capacity as pilot. By this persistency he was allowed £65 for his services in 1748, and £75 in 1749, in which year the Governor sent a message to the House with Ball's memorial, urging the Court "to do something for the Relief of so good & useful an officer & so prevent his quitting a Business he is so well fitted for." His pay then dropped to £40, but by 1756 was raised to £60, at which figure it seems to have remained. Ball was taxed in Hull, and had some difficulty with the towns-people about the assessment, his position being, apparently, that he was a non-resident. December 8, 1766, the town voted to discharge him on his proposal to pay £5 for each of the four

previous years, and the same sum annually thereafter so long as he continued to keep the lighthouse. But some ill-feeling seemed to remain. A few years later a lot of Ball's fire-wood was carried off by a storm and landed in Hull; he sent a man (William Minns) after it, who was informed that if he would swear that he owned the wood he should have what the law allowed, and Ball advised the Court that not being able to recover any of it he was obliged to buy more.

In the first period of the existence of the light the work of the keepers was multifarious. They do not seem to have been expected to devote all their time to the light, and were allowed to eke out their incomes by engaging as pilots as has been shown. What is more, they appear to have regarded the title of "pilot" as a greater distinction than that of "keeper." \*

On occasions they were called upon for additional service. Reference has been made to the use of the lighthouse island as a signal station in times of public danger: whether the keepers had any extra help for this purpose we do not know. The traveller Bennett would have us believe that there was always a "guard" at the island, but this may be doubted if by "guard" is meant more than the keeper and his assistants. It is probable that most of this extra work fell upon the keepers. Sometimes they were paid for it, sometimes

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\* In his will Ball describes himself as "of Boston — pilot" without in any way referring to the lighthouse.

not. Thus in 1722, at the time of the small-pox scare in Boston, Captain Hayes complained of the extraordinary expense and trouble he had been put to in giving notice to vessels from France and other places infected with the plague, and requiring them to perform quarantine. For this he was allowed twenty pounds. A number of years later he was granted a like amount because of time spent in obedience to an order of the Council looking out for "his Excellency's coming in," whereby he lost the opportunity of piloting vessels.

July 4, 1728, Hayes was ordered to keep a watch for Henry Phillips, the murderer of Benjamin Woodbridge. Phillips had killed Woodbridge the evening before in a duel on the Common. It was the first duel in Boston and made a great commotion, the principals being young men of prominent families. All of these commissions were given to the second keeper, but Ball had his extra duties, as his petitions indicate.

When the light was rebuilt after the Revolution, the keeper was Thomas Knox,\* and this leads us to take up again the story of the structure.

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\* Thomas Knox was the son of Adam and Martha (King) Knox, his mother being a daughter of Robert Ball's first wife, Mrs. Martha King. The relations between Ball and the young people seem to have been very close. He remembered Martha Knox in his will, referring to her as his daughter-in-law, and in a letter written in 1794, Thomas Knox calls Ball his grandfather. Mrs. Martha Ball died May 30, 1765, and on October 10th Ball married Mary Webber of Cambridge, who survived him. Ball lies buried at Copp's Hill along with his wife Martha.



Upon the evacuation of Boston by the British in March, 1776, all of the enemy's vessels did not immediately leave the harbor, but lay near the Castle. Then, pestered by the Continentals from the neighboring heights and islands, they fell down to Nantasket Roads, where they remained until June. June 13, companies of men set out from Boston and the neighboring towns, and landing upon Long Island and Nantasket Hill commanding the Roads, they planted cannon and opened fire on the fleet.\* Whereupon the British set sail and left the harbor for good, but on the way they stopped at the Brewsters and fired a train, which blew up the lighthouse. The British were not so particular on the occasion of this their final farewell to Boston but that they left some "Stores and Implements," belonging to the lighthouse, in a serviceable condition. A guard was placed over them by the military the very day the British sailed, and the Council promptly took measures to secure them for the use of the State. September 3, 1776, the Council gave directions to the Commissary General, "As the old top of the Light House is rendered unfit to be used for that purpose in future, . . . . to deliver so much of it to the committee for fortyfying the harbour of Boston as they shall need to Supply the Cannon with Ladles." This was the end of the original

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\* Consisting, according to Deacon Tudor, of eight ships, two snows two brigs and a schooner.



lighthouse after a life of sixty years. "Ladle" is defined in the dictionaries as "an instrument for drawing a charge from a cannon."

During the remaining years of the Revolution and for a year or two thereafter no light seems to have been maintained at the entrance of Boston harbor. And for a period of seven or eight years after the light was destroyed by the British, the Little Brewster was bare of a lighthouse building. In 1780 the committee on fortifications was engaged in fixing a beacon "upon the spit of sand near the Place where the late Light House stood," it having been represented to the Court in the previous December that the absence of such a beacon made the entrance of the harbor dangerous to mariners. The order issued called for the erection of a beacon "to answer the purposes for wch. the former was Erected." This structure, without doubt, was merely a nautical beacon, such as has been described, and was erected at about the site of the present Bug Light, at the end of the long sand-bar running westerly from the Great Brewster, for a beacon of the kind mentioned is shown at this spot on the State plan of the town of Hull, made in 1795, and the Des Barres Map of the harbor twenty years earlier indicates one at the same place.

It seems, indeed, that a beacon had existed there for a long time, for in 1755 the committee upon repairs of the Castle was directed to erect a beacon "on the Spit

of Sand near the Light-house, in the room of that which was carried away by the late Storm." In its turn the beacon of 1780 was swept away and taken up afloat in Braintree Bay, "the pole and wheels in good order." This happened during the storm of November, 1789, the same that destroyed the structure on Beacon Hill in Boston, so that, as Wheildon says, "there was nothing of it thereafter but the name."

In June, 1783, however, a committee of the Marine Society of Boston addressed a Memorial to the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth, on the subject of the increase in trade, which "returning Peace with all its great concomitant Advantages" would probably bring to the State, declaring that the "Two principal Requisites for the Accomplishment of this most desirable Purpose are the Erection of judiciously disposed Light-Houses & the Establishment of a regular skillful System of Pilotage. The Losses occasioned by the egregious Defect in both during the Continuance of the late War," being, the committee said, "too distressing and too recent to demand a recital." This resulted in the appointment of committees to consider the expediency of erecting lighthouses on the coasts of the State, and the passage of an Act in July, 1783, wherein Richard Devens, Esq., Commissary General of the Commonwealth, was directed to build a lighthouse as soon as possible on the island "at the Entrance of Boston Harbor" where the old house stood, "*to be nearly of the*

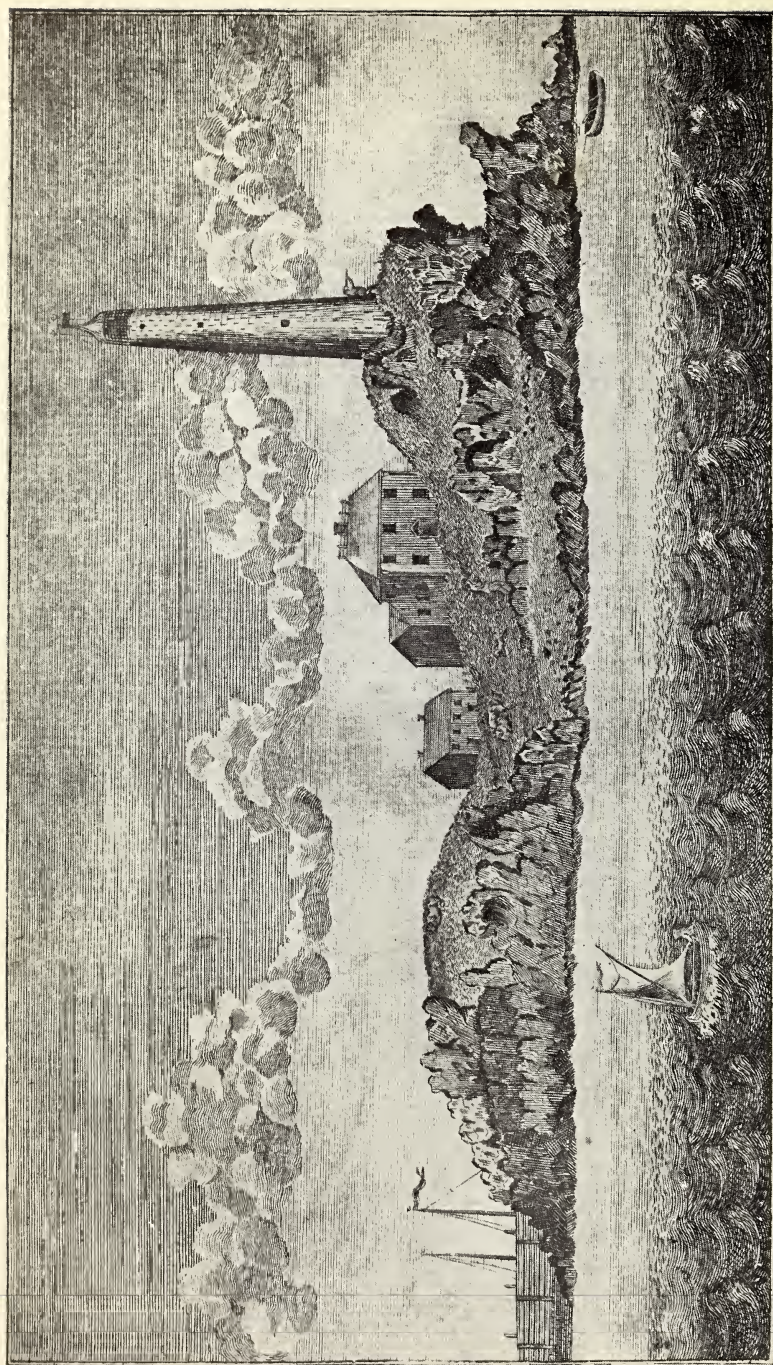
*same dimensions of the former Light-house.*" He was also directed to repair the wharves at the island and construct such other buildings as were necessary. To do all this he was granted the sum of £1,000. September 23 Devens advised the Court that he had found the grant so inadequate he was forced to confine his attention to the lighthouse, which was about three-quarters done, but that in order to accomplish even this much he had "been Obligated to borrow considerable sums of money on his own private Credit." And he asked the Court "to look into the business" and instruct him about it. The Court accordingly appointed a committee which visited the light and reported that the work intrusted to the Commissary General had been conducted "with wisdom and fidelity." The report then continues: "That it is supposed the whole expense may amount to about Five thousand pounds, That three fourths of the work is now done, and if s<sup>d</sup> Devens can be supplied with Four hundred and fifty pounds, he will be able so far to compleat the bussines, as to put the work into a state of security and to have a Light, before the approaching Winter."\* The £450 was granted October 18th, and the light seems to have been ready for use within a couple of months, for the pay of the keeper began December 5, 1783. Devens paid bills as late as

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\* In the archives of the Bureau of Light-Houses is a list of those houses ceded by the States to the Federal Government, in which the cost of Boston Light, "when built," is given as \$19,881.44.







BOSTON LIGHT, 1788.

From an Engraving in the Massachusetts Magazine of February, 1789.

August, 1784, for work done on the island, but just how much the new structure cost is uncertain.

An engraving of the new lighthouse, showing a southwest view, appears as the frontispiece of the "*Massachusetts Magazine*" for February, 1789. In the same number is the article by Thomas Knox, the keeper, but who signs himself as "Branch Pilot for the Port of Boston," to which reference has been made. From this we learn that the structure was sixty feet high, or seventy-five including the lantern, which was octagonal in shape and twenty-five feet in circumference. The tower was conical with a circumference of seventy-five feet at the base and forty-five at the top, and having walls diminishing in thickness from seven and one-half feet at the bottom to two and one-half feet underneath the lantern. Like the old structure, the new one was built of stone.\*

At the time when Knox wrote, the lighthouse was under the control of the Governor and Council, and was maintained by what was called "light-money," a tax of "one shilling per ton on all foreign vessels entrance, and two pence half penny on American vessels clearance." In a note to the article it is said: "There is a Cannon at the Light House to be fired to

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\* Benjamin Lincoln says (1804) "of the best hewn stone," but a more detailed report by W. L. Dearborn, in 1857, describes the material as "the first ten feet . . . of rubble-stone, the remainder of split-granite in courses of 12" or 14" rise." And the tower is generally referred to in the reports upon it as "rough stone" or "rubble masonry."



answer any Signal Gun in thick weather," and the 1838 edition of Bowen's "Picture of Boston" indicates that a gun was used as late as that date. Indeed it seems probable that the fog signal at the light continued to be a gun for a still longer period, for it was not until 1851 or '52 that the first fog-bell was installed on the island, though one had been recommended at least ten years before. In 1869 the old bell machinery was removed and its place supplied by a set of Stevens' striking apparatus. Three years later a Daboll fog-trumpet was set up at the light, and this was the regular fog signal until a first class siren was put in operation in 1887.

June 10, 1790, Boston Light and the island on which it stands together with the other lighthouses and light-house sites belonging to the Commonwealth, were ceded to the United States, and passed out of the jurisdiction of the State.\*

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\* There were but twelve other lighthouses in the United States at the time when the Federal Government took over Boston Light, viz.:

CEDED	
Cape Henlopen, Del. (the property of Penn.)	Sept., 1789.
Sandy Hook, N. J. (the property of N. Y.)	Feb. 3, 1790.
Portland Head, Me. (the property of Mass.)	June 10, 1790.
Plum Island, Mass.	June 10, 1790.
Thatcher's Island, Mass.	June 10, 1790.
Plymouth, Mass.	June 10, 1790.
Nantucket, Mass. (also Beacon)	June 10, 1790.
Newcastle Island, N. H.	Feb. 14, 1791.
New London, Conn.	Oct. 1791.
Conanicut Island, R. I.	?
Middle Bay Island, So. Car.	1791.
Tybee, Ga.	1791.

Since the light has been in the possession of the Federal Government, repairs and changes have been made from time to time, and from a petition of the Marine Society in 1815, to have the lighthouse "lighted during the winter months," it may be inferred that the operation of the light was suspended as a defensive measure, during the course of the war with Great Britain. But as compared with the original structure, that built in 1783 has enjoyed a quiet and uneventful career,\* and except as altered and repaired, it stands as it was erected more than one hundred and twenty-five years ago.

Writing in 1843, Capt. Winslow Lewis, at one time connected with the Lighthouse Establishment, said: "To this day there is not one stone in the whole tower moved from the position it was first laid in."

In June, 1809, the superintendent, Henry Dearborn, reported three perpendicular cracks in the walls of the tower, from half an inch to an inch and a half in width, extending from ten or twelve feet above the base to within a few feet of the top. These cracks had opened so much during the previous winter that it was feared the building would become dangerous unless steps were taken to check further cracking, and resort was had

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\* A correspondent of the "Boston Post," writing from Hull in 1845, tells as a good joke that "there was recently a *Spanish* cigar factory on the island," in which "the operatives were young girls from Boston."

once more to iron bands.\* This time but six hoops were used and without a wooden casing.

The device was successful, and there seems to have been no serious question about its safety until 1857, when the presence of cracks in the tower was attributed to "original bad construction" which had been counteracted by "temporary expedients," and the belief was expressed that it would have to be rebuilt "at no distant day." This however was not done, but in 1859 it was "completely renovated," the tower "lined with brick," and raised until it measured eighty feet above the ground, and a new keeper's dwelling erected. And so the light remained until 1886, when "a large bulge of the outer ring of rubble masonry was removed from the tower and replaced by brick masonry, carefully banded to the hearting."

The original stairway was of wood, and so frequently in need of repair as to be an annoyance to the Government. In 1844 a contract was made with the South Boston Iron Company to equip the lighthouse with a cast-iron circular stair-case having a centre iron pipe and a wrought-iron railing. The contract also called for a cast-iron deck and scuttle, iron window frames, a large outside door of iron, and an inside door with frame and

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\* Carter's pilot said he helped to hoop the tower "forty-eight years ago." *A Summer Cruise on the Coast of New England* (made in 1858), by Robert Carter, p. 24.

large arch-piece over it, — all for the price of \$1,500. Some of this work can still be seen.

No story of Boston Light would be complete without some reference to methods of illumination. Indeed this topic furnishes perhaps the most interesting chapter in the whole history of lighthouse construction. Until nearly the close of the eighteenth century the lighthouses of Great Britain, and of Continental Europe also, were lighted by means of a coal or wood fire, exposed in open braziers on their summits, or by candles enclosed in lanterns.

We find it stated in one account that so late as the year 1811 the famous Eddystone Light was illuminated by twenty-four wax candles, and that the Lizard Lighthouse, one of the most important in England, displayed a coal fire in 1812. Neither of these methods seems to have been employed in America. At least there is no record of a brazier at Boston Light, and although it is said by Mr. Arnold Burgess Johnson, in his admirable monograph on "The Modern Light-House Service," that the light "was first lighted by tallow candles," we have not been able to substantiate the statement. The light on Beacon Island was first "kindled," to borrow the expression in the "Boston News Letter," September 14, 1716. November 27 of the same year the Commissioner of Impost was directed by the General Court to supply the keeper "with Oyl Week & Candles for

the maintaining the Lights," and to enter them in his accounts. It is fair to assume that the oil and wick were to light the lantern, and there is nothing in the order to show that the use of oil was something new. Perhaps both lamps and candles were used in the lantern, but of this there is no evidence. Further, it will be remembered that Capt. Hayes reasoned that the fire in 1720 was occasioned by the *lamps* dropping oil on the wood beneath, and a falling snuff igniting it. If then candles were ever used, it must have been for but a comparatively short time.

In September, 1717, William Payne is mentioned in the Council Records as having "the care of altering the Lights of the Light House & what else is necessary to be done thereto." What alteration was proposed we do not know, but Payne's expense account amounting to £192:16:6, which was presented and allowed in December of the same year, was "for altering the Light House," and would seem to refer to the proposal he made to the Council in September, that the roof of the lantern be covered with lead, to which the Council agreed.

The lamp used was nothing more in style than the common oil-burner of the period, without a chimney. The wick was solid, and the oil, fish or whale oil.—Johnson says "fish oil," which he intimates was used in the lighthouses of the United States until "sperm oil" was substituted about 1812. But the term "fish



oil" embraces certain kinds of whale oil. The oil of the "right" whale was a common illuminant at the time Boston Light was established, and the hunt of the "sperm-whale" began early in the eighteenth century. With the decrease in the catch, sperm oil became too expensive, and when the Lighthouse Board came into existence in 1852, it immediately undertook to find a substitute. This resulted in the use of colza, an oil employed extensively in France and obtained from the seed of several plants, but in particular from that of the wild cabbage. Colza was soon followed by lard oil, which continued to be the illuminant in American light-houses until the item of cost once more compelled the Government to make a change. The new substitute was mineral oil, the present illuminant.\*

The trouble with the use of these utensils for light-house illumination was the great amount of smoke created and the danger from fire. Some form of reflector may have been used with the first lamps, though it is doubtful, and the first great improvement came with the invention by M. Aimé Argand,† of the celebrated lamp which now bears his name, the first really

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\* Johnson, "The Modern Light-House Service," pp. 53 *et seq.* Mineral oil was substituted for lard oil, and lamps for burning the former installed in Boston Light in August, 1882.

† A Swiss chemist born at Geneva, 1755; died 1803. He lived in England and made the first model of his lamp there in 1782, but he appears to have enjoyed little profit from his great invention, which was not successful until the effect of the addition of a glass chimney was accidentally discovered.



satisfactory one that the world had known. Argand contrived, by means of a hollow wick, to secure a double current of air, an interior as well as an exterior draft, and his invention was patented in 1784. His lamps were first utilized for lighthouse illumination on the French coast, where they were used in connection with mirrors. Then they were taken up by the English, and with the introduction of the Argand lamp came glass chimneys, and the general use of reflectors.

Capt. Knox tells us that in 1789 Boston Light was illuminated by four lamps, each containing a gallon of oil and having four lights, "making in all sixteen lights." These were not Argand lamps, and what range the light then had the Captain does not say, but it was so frequently complained of as to induce Gen. Benjamin Lincoln (recently appointed by President Washington Collector of the Port of Boston and in charge of the lights in the district in which Boston Light was situated) to attempt to improve it. Lincoln at once concluded that the lack of brilliancy in the light was not due to either the quality or quantity of the oil consumed, but resulted from the defect common in all the lighthouses of the period, — the want of an adequate arrangement for ridding the lantern of smoke. The lanterns of 1790 formed a point at the top where an opening was left through which the smoke was expected to escape. At Boston Light this hole was covered by "an old man's head," so-called, with an opening on one side. This

head, much like some chimney tops in use to-day, "turned on a pivot and by the addition of a copper plate fixed to it, it was turned by the wind so as to keep the aperture always to leeward while it traversed well." The trouble was that it did not always "traverse well," but was frequently out of order and would not turn except "in a strong gale," with the result that the keeper was often obliged at great risk to climb the outside of the lantern and turn the head by hand. Further, the opening at the top was the only one. No attempt was made to secure a circulation of air, and it is easy to imagine what the conditions in the lantern must have been when the wind blew directly into it from above.

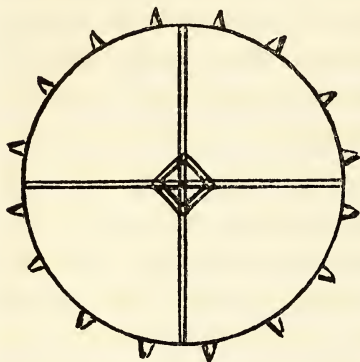
The General removed the "old man's head" and covered the opening with a contrivance of copper "made in the form of a saucer reversed," greater in diameter than the opening, and with "small ventilators" in it. He also placed more small ventilators in the roof of the lantern and cut some holes near the bottom. Notwithstanding these changes the lamps continued to smoke "in a degree": so he turned his attention to the lamp and constructed a new one which he describes as follows\*: —

The lamp, or the receiver of the oil, is in a circular form about three feet diameter cut into quarters, each quarter inde-

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\* Letter of Benj. Lincoln to the Secretary of the Treasury, in the archives of the Bureau of Light Houses at Washington, and dated Nov. 16, 1790.

pendent, as to retaining the oyl, of the other. Thereby they are more safely handled, and may be repaired separately. See figure



as they (*sic*) the marks on the periphery are to represent the different weeks. The square in the middle a cavity through which the air may ascend. By the openings at the bottom there is a constant accession of fresh air which circulating through the above represented square and the space between the

glass and the lamps extends the blaze, and gives that, and the smoake, a perpendicular direction, hence the light is increased and the smoake receives a proper direction to escape. . . .

Lincoln thus set to work along correct lines, and, whether consciously or not, adopted, in part at least, the scheme of a lamp that Argand perfected. In addition he claimed for his invention certain advantages which are interesting, as showing the difficulties that stood in the way of a good light in the earlier period of light-house illumination. These advantages arose from the fact that he constructed the receiver with so large a surface\* "that during the whole night" the oil receded from the "blaze or top of the wick but about two inches"

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\* His first lamp he thought was not large enough for Boston Light, but would do for "one of the houses on Thatcher's Island," saying: "The circumference of the lamp should be as large as may be, only leaving a passage way between that and the glass" of the lantern.

with the result that there was "no essential odds in the degree of light from evening to morning," and the lights were so clustered as to keep the oil warm and thus to avoid the "necessity of burning coals in the winter in the lantern to prevent the oyl from chilling." This last was a most important consideration. The item of firewood "for preventing y<sup>e</sup> Oyle from Congealing" appears frequently in Ball's expense account, and Knox is quoted as stating that before Gen. Lincoln changed the lamps, "he kept a charcoal fire all night in the lantern & used to expend 30 Bushels of coals in the winter" without the results which the new lamps effected.

Despite the improvements made, a light was not shown which was satisfactory to the men of the sea. In 1796 Capt. Joshua Wetherle wanted to have the lamps in Boston Light conform to his plan,\* and two years later in order to ascertain "the foundation of the long and frequent complaints respecting the insufficiency of the Light and especially at certain times," Lincoln visited the place and had the lamps lighted in his presence.

"The lantern became," he said, "in a short time full of smoak and so suffocating that it was painful for a

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\* About the year 1800 a Mr. Cannington exhibited some "improved lamps" from "the Cupola on the Top of the new State House," and a committee of the Boston Marine Society reported that a part of their number on board a Revenue Cutter half way between the State House and Boston Light, "decided that the power and glare of the light far exceeded the light from the Boston light house."

person to remain there for any considerable time." The same old problem remained to be solved, and other ventilators were suggested. The "badness of the light in the Boston Light House" being called to his attention in 1804 by "a merchant in New Bedford," Lincoln replied that although it never had been thought "one of the best lights," he had heard no complaint save this one, since "some years" ago he "took out the old lamps and replaced them by one of a different form;" and he referred to the keeper, Knox, in support of the improvements, and of his conviction that "no very material alteration" could "advantageously be made."

This was the situation when, in 1807, Capt. Winslow Lewis\* of Boston, began some experiments in the illumination of lighthouses. His first exhibition was in the cupola of the State House, and all subsequent to that in Boston Light. In June, 1810, Mr. Lewis took out a patent for a "reflecting and magnifying lantern," which patent was unfortunately destroyed in a fire in the Patent

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\* He was born at Wellfleet, Cape Cod, May 11, 1770, the son of a sea captain of the same name. He quit the sea, became interested in lighthouse construction and illumination, and is said to have built for the Government two hundred lighthouses. His life shows him to have been a very active man. He was commander of the Boston Sea Fencibles, organized during the War of 1812, and was taken prisoner by the British when making a visit to one of the lighthouses in the Bay. He owned a ropewalk at the foot of the Common, and was for several years Port Warden of Boston. (For a notice of this ropewalk and the Sea Fencibles see pp. 17 and 18 of this volume.) In 1829 and again in 1836 he was an Alderman of the City, and he was President of the Marine Society, and a prominent Freemason. He died May 20, 1850.



Office in 1836—but the invention has been described as consisting of “the argand lamp and a spherical reflector with a kind of lens placed in front (known in common parlance as a bull’s eye, and used, on account of its great thickness, to transmit light through cellar doors, hollow pavements and ships’ decks.)” The reflectors, we are told, “came about as near to a true paraboloid as did a barber’s basin,” and inasmuch as the lens was “of green bottle glass, four inches thick through the axis,” the whole was said to have only made a “bad light worse.” However, the characterizations quoted are not wholly friendly, and Lewis’s apparatus must have been some improvement over the existing one, for it was tried in one of the lighthouses on Thatcher’s Island as an experiment, and regarded as so satisfactory that Boston Light was fitted with it. This was in May, 1811, and in 1812 the Government purchased the patent for \$20,000.

Lewis’s light was indorsed by the Lighthouse Superintendent and by several committees of the Boston Marine Society sent to observe Boston Light. Later, Lewis was able to show that under his system vastly less oil was consumed than with the old lamps. This was perhaps due to the Argand lamp, and it may be added that that burner, when properly lighted, emits little or no smoke.

For a period of twenty-five or thirty years thereafter Winslow Lewis was engaged in the business of erecting



and fitting out lighthouses for the United States in accordance with this invention, and until 1839 little or no change was made in the American method, except to discard the bull's eye lens. Meanwhile a Frenchman, Augustin Fresnel,\* had made the second great step toward a perfect light, — perhaps the greatest of all advances, — the use of lenses and prisms for the refraction of the light, instead of its reflection by polished metallic surfaces. Fresnel's improvement was invented in 1822 ; but the adoption of his apparatus — the dioptric, so-called — came about very slowly in this country.

When the State lighthouses came into the possession of the Federal Government they were placed under the control of the Treasury Department, and the Secretary of the Treasury seems to have given them his personal attention until 1820, except for two periods when the Commissioner of the Revenue had charge. In 1820 the duty of superintendence devolved upon the Fifth Auditor of the Treasury, Mr. Stephen Pleasanton, who remained at the head of the establishment until 1852. During his term the number of lights was so largely increased that

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\* Augustin Jean Fresnel was born at Broglie, France, May 10, 1788, and died near Paris July 14, 1827. He began researches in optics about 1814, and in 1819 received the prize of the "Académie des Sciences" for a memoir on diffraction. The same year he was made a Lighthouse Commissioner; member of the Academy 1823, and of the Royal Society of London 1825. During his last illness the Royal Society conferred upon him the Rumford medal. But his great labors in the cause of optical science received during his life-time scant public recognition.

it was difficult for one man to give them the attention demanded, and about 1838 complaints began to be made as to the inefficiency of the service. The result was that Congress provided for the importation of two sets of the most improved kinds of illuminating apparatus. These were to be set up and tested, and, at the same time, naval officers were detailed to examine and report on the existing apparatus and the lighthouses that contained them.\*

The report of Lieut. Edward W. Carpenter describes that on Little Brewster as "a revolving light, consisting of 14 argand lamps, with parabolic reflectors arranged in equal numbers on opposite sides of an oblong-square," the lamps being "of about the volume of similar lamps in family use." This was in November, 1838, the year in which the first lighthouse "List" was published, and the diameter of the reflectors in Boston Light is there given as sixteen inches. Because of the size of the iron frames of the lanterns, the fact that many were painted black inside and that the glass was generally full of blisters and waves, Lieut. Carpenter stated that the lights in the district he examined had "no chance of presenting a vivid and striking appearance." Nevertheless he thought that Boston Light "must be seen full 20 miles." The List says that it was twenty-two miles, and Winslow Lewis claimed its range to be thirty.

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\* Johnson, as cited, pp. 14 *et seq.*

Carpenter proposed that the lanterns thereafter be made of copper with their principal strength, as well as the railing, on the land side, so as to interfere as little as possible with the seaward sweep of the light; and he further suggested that the lanterns inside be plated with silver so as to render them "reflective." This scheme was adopted in part at Boston, for of the two sets of apparatus provided for by Congress, one, a lenticular (Fresnel) double light, was tried at Neversink, N. J.; the other, consisting of English reflectors, twenty-one inches in diameter, was installed in Boston in 1839, and, preparatory to receiving it an absolutely new lantern of "bronze" was constructed. This was designed by Mr. I. W. P. Lewis, an engineer, and as described by him in 1842 it had sixteen sides against eight in the old lantern, with panes of plate glass two by three feet in place of the common glass of the previous period, measuring only ten by twelve inches.

Boston Light was, therefore, at this time, as twenty-eight years before, one of the first of the country to be fitted with improved apparatus, though the Fresnel type which finally became the standard was first installed at Neversink. Lewis said that with the English reflectors the light could be "seen in clear weather thirteen and three-fourths miles with perfect distinctness." But the lighthouse Lists continued to say twenty-two miles until the year 1848, at which time the distance crept up to twenty-five miles.

In 1842 the Secretary of the Treasury, his attention arrested by the increase of lighthouse expenditures, determined to have a further examination made of the lighthouses on the coasts of Maine and Massachusetts. This work he intrusted to the same engineer, under instructions not only to investigate and report on the existing condition of the lights, but to make recommendations for a new system. This gentleman, curiously enough a nephew of Winslow Lewis,\* made an exhaustive report,† in which he severely criticised the contract system under which the lighthouses had been constructed, and the condition of the houses he examined, going so far as to accuse his uncle of copying his patented invention of 1810 from a lighthouse on the coast of Ireland, and treating the invention as of little worth. The report drew a spirited reply from the uncle, printed in a pamphlet of sixty pages,‡ in which he denied the charges of his nephew, and his claim of responsibility for the then recent improvements at Boston Light. Winslow Lewis supported his reply with many affidavits and documents, and they give us much interesting information about his own work. The outcome of the controversy was further Congressional

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\* The nephew's full name was Isaiah William Penn Lewis, born June 15, 1808, died Oct. 18, 1855. He was a son of Winslow Lewis's younger brother, Isaiah, who died at sea April 20, 1822. For a genealogy of the Lewis family, see *N. E. Hist. Gen. Reg.*, XVII: p. 162.

† Document, Ser. 422, No. 183, 27th Congress, 3rd Session.

‡ *A Review of the Report of I. W. P. Lewis, etc.*, Boston, 1843.

investigation, ending with the establishment of the Lighthouse Board in 1852.

Under the Act establishing the Board no person connected with the lighthouse service could be interested in furnishing lighthouse supplies, or in any contract or method for constructing or illuminating the lighthouses of the country.

Boston Light was refitted in 1849, and again in 1856, and finally in 1859 it was provided with illuminating apparatus of the Fresnel type.\* This was the year when the tower was raised and the structure generally renovated. The new apparatus presented a very different appearance from the old, for in place of fourteen separate lamps the Fresnel light substituted "a single central lamp-flame proceeding from concentric wicks, varying in number from one to five." Around this was arranged the lens, made in France, consisting of rings of glass, "so shaped and placed as to throw out in a horizontal direction all the light received upon them." †

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\* Mr. John H. Sheppard, in N. E. Hist. Gen. Reg., XVII: 165 (1863), gives the credit for the introduction of the system into this country to I. W. P. Lewis, saying: "Isaiah W. P. Lewis went to France on this account, spent two years there, *became intimate with Fresnel*, . . . and after much newspaper discussion, opposition in high places, and frequent discouragement, succeeded in introducing it." As Fresnel died when I. W. P. Lewis was only nineteen, Sheppard's story of their intimacy may be taken for what it is worth.

† See Edward Bissell Hunt, "Light-House Construction and Illumination," Boston, 1857, at p. 14.



Previously Boston Light had been rated as a light of the first class, but with the installation of the Fresnel apparatus it was designated and is still known as a "second order" light, this rating being determined by the inside diameter of the lens.\*

The Fresnel lamp was lighted December 20, 1859, and, in the opinion of the district superintendent "looked finely." The pilots of Boston, however, did not agree with him, and on the 11th of the next month petitioned the Board to replace the old reflectors. The protest was unavailing, and a return has never been made to the old system. The distance that the light is visible has changed very little. In 1856 it could be seen sixteen miles, which is about the range of the light to-day, reckoned in nautical miles.

To the layman the distinctive feature of the light in Boston Lighthouse is that it revolves, and the light has been a revolving one for a long time. The records of the Light House Bureau show that revolving machinery was placed in Boston Light on July 5, 1811, that is, about two months after the time when Capt. Winslow Lewis says he fitted the lighthouse with his new lamps and reflectors; and this was the first revolving machinery used on the island. Under the older system of illumination a revolving light possessed one decided advantage, aside from the fact that it was easily distin-

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\* The only "first order" light in Boston Bay is in the new lighthouse on the Graves. "Minot's," like Boston Light is of the second order.



guishable from other lights, namely, that fewer lamps were required to produce a light of relatively the same brilliancy as a fixed light. Other lights than Boston were made to revolve in those early days, but it is not probable that the light in the original structure on the Little Brewster revolved, else some reference to the fact would be found in the documents upon the lighthouse. And if there was a revolving light there when Benjamin Lincoln was struggling to overcome the defects in the lantern, he would most likely have mentioned it in his correspondence. Cape Cod Light was established in 1798, and in September of the previous year Gen. Lincoln informed the Marine Society\* that it was "to be distinguished from the Light House in Boston by having an eclipser regularly passing round it."

This indicates that Boston Light was then a steady light, and not until the seventh edition was published in 1812 does the "American Coast Pilot" show that it was anything else. In that edition the light is described in a foot-note, the important second sentence of which does not appear in the earlier editions, viz :

Boston Light-House stands on a small island on the north entrance of the channel (*Point Alderton* and *Nantucket* [*sic*, *Nantasket*] *heights* being on the south) and is about 65 feet high. It contains a REVOLVING LIGHT, on Lewis' improved plan, and will

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\* Nathaniel Spooner, "Gleanings from the Records of the Boston Marine Society," p. 46, for which reference I have to thank Mr. John W Farwell of the Bostonian Society.

appear brilliant forty seconds, and be obscured twenty seconds, alternately. Two huts are erected here with accommodations for shipwrecked seamen. A cannon is lodged and mounted at the Light-House to answer signals.

The "improved plan" doubtless referred to Lewis's lamps.

Winslow Lewis reported to Albert Gallatin in 1811 that Boston Light had "been fitted on the plan . . . . for the revolving light" which he had submitted to the Secretary the previous winter. There seems to be no reason to doubt that Lewis installed it, but by whom the first revolving machinery was made is not so clear.

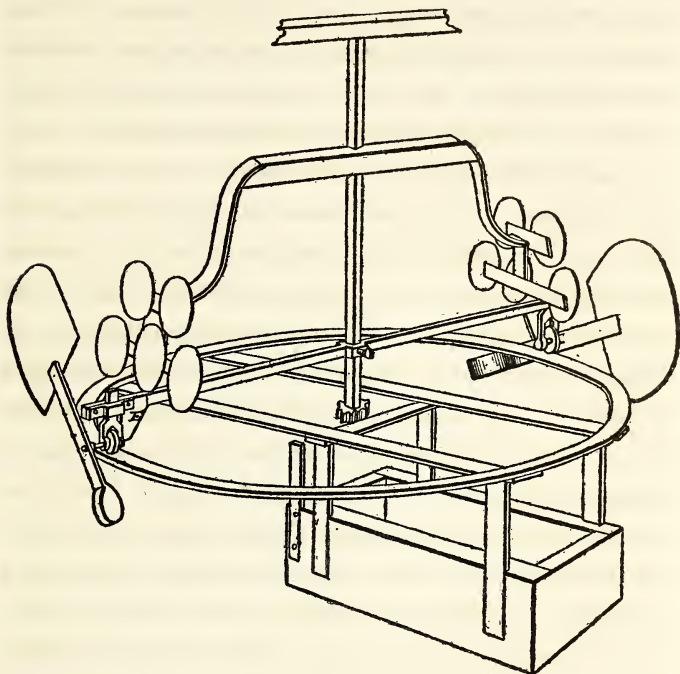
From the Report of Lieut. Carpenter we learn that in 1838 the apparatus in Boston Light was "turned by common clock work," the revolution requiring three and one-half minutes, "during which the combined light of seven lamps is seen twice from each point of the compass." It is a tradition in the Willard family that Simon Willard, Sr., made revolving machinery for some lighthouse. There were a number of Willards, all famous as clock-makers in their day, and having places of business in or near Boston. It is quite probable, therefore, that machinery for Boston Light was made by some of them, and if the revolving machinery of 1811 were made by a Willard, that Willard was most likely the elder Simon, who was an inventor as well as a clock-maker.

In October, 1828, the Superintendent of Lights for the district of Massachusetts was authorized to procure an entirely new set of machinery for revolving Boston Light and "to accept the offer of Mr. Willard to supply it, on his improved plan, for two hundred and thirty dollars, employing him also to repair the old machinery." This Mr. Willard was either Simon or his son Benjamin F., but the order does not tell us which, or what improvement had been effected. In 1839, however, the same Benjamin F. Willard took out a patent for what he called "a Revolving Flashing Light," the distinctive feature of the invention being a shade of tin or other bright metal which was made to revolve rapidly in *front* of the lamps as they turned, thus causing the lights "to appear and disappear in quick succession of sudden flashes." This may have been the "improved plan" of 1828, but it is doubtful, and there is a question also when, if ever, Benjamin F. Willard installed new machinery in Boston Lighthouse. Yet Mr. Z. A. Willard, grandson of Simon, Sr., and now living in Boston, remembers a set of revolving apparatus designed for Boston Light and made by Benjamin at his brother's (Simon, Jr.) place in Roxbury some time in the early thirties.\*

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\* One of the lighthouses at Ipswich erected in 1837 was fitted with machinery "made at the old establishment of Simon Willard at Roxbury," if the statement of Lott Pool, printed in Winslow Lewis's "Review," is correct.

This machine was provided with a shield or "eclipser" which rotated around the lamps, and it is evident that some change affecting the revolution of the light was



BENJAMIN F. WILLARD'S "IMPROVEMENT FOR REVOLVING LIGHTS FOR LIGHT-HOUSES," 1839, from the Records of the United States Patent Office.

made in the period from 1811 to 1838, when we compare the time of revolution as stated in the Coast Pilot and in Lieut. Carpenter's report.

In 1842 Mr. I. W. P. Lewis wrote that the "machine of rotation" at Boston Light was "enclosed in a glazed

case to protect it from dust and moisture . . . the pulleys made with great nicety to diminish friction." The revolution of the light at that time took three minutes, during which there were "two bright periods and two eclipses." By 1854 the time of revolution was reduced to a minute and a half, and at present the light is described as "flashing white every thirty seconds."

It now remains for us to complete the list of light-house keepers. Thomas Knox was appointed keeper Nov. 28, 1783, and held the position until 1811, serving first the State and after 1790, the nation. Knox was succeeded by Jonathan Bruce, who, according to an affidavit made by him and printed in Winslow Lewis's "Review," "was keeper of Boston light house from the time it was fitted up by Winslow Lewis with patent lamps and reflectors in 1811 until 1834." But the records of the Light House Bureau show that Bruce was succeeded by David Tower, of Cohasset, September 11, 1833. Tower kept the light until his death in 1844, and the keepers following him, to date, are given in the list appended to this paper.

In 1785 the State allowed Knox the sum of £120 for himself and two assistants: what the Federal Government granted him does not appear. But about 1794 some reduction of his salary took place, and he wrote a letter to Benjamin Lincoln in which he raised the old question of pilotage. It seems that when Knox was appointed keeper his two brothers were made pilots with



him, with authority to add as many others as the needs of the harbor required. This state of affairs continued until the United States took over the lighthouse, when Knox declared that by accepting a commission from the President as keeper he lost the friendship of Gov. Hancock, who gave the office of "branch pilot" to another. The result was that while the whole pilotage business was no longer under his direction Knox had to retain in his employ nearly as many pilots as formerly, in order to attend vessels "in the inclement seasons." In 1838, Lieut. Carpenter reported that the keeper was permitted to pilot vessels and had realized \$150 a year from the business; but that it frequently took him away from the light at night. The Lieutenant then very pertinently inquired, "whether it would not be better to remove all complaint of inadequacy of salary as made by this keeper and prohibit by law, all light-house keepers from engaging in any pursuit calculated to absent them from home at the time they are required to prepare, to light and to attend their lights." \*

The salary of the keeper of Boston Light in 1849 was \$400. Beginning about 1861 the keeper has regularly been provided with two assistants. They now devote all of their attention to the light while on duty, but each in turn has a stated period of shore leave, and

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\* In 1829 the Marine Society recommended the keeper, Jonathan Bruce, as "competent to take charge of any vessel as a pilot drawing from 7 to 16 feet water."



the Government pays, at present, the principal keeper \$74.30 a month, his first assistant \$54.30 for the same period, and the second assistant \$49.30. Included in these amounts is a ration allowance of \$9.30 each, figured at the daily rate of thirty cents for a month of thirty-one days.

Boston Light is still a commanding object at the entrance of the Harbor, though it is not so prominent a feature of the landscape as it once was, for its pre-eminence is now disputed by the new and more powerful light on the Graves. Its importance to mariners has been lessened by the opening of the new channel in Broad Sound ; but its distinction as the oldest light in the country, and its history, are possessions that can never be taken away.



## NOTE.

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### THE KEEPERS OF BOSTON LIGHT

FROM THE TIME IT WENT INTO OPERATION UNTO THE  
PRESENT DAY.

- George Worthylake.....Sept. 14, 1716 — Nov. 3, 1718  
(When he was drowned.)
- Robert Saunders.....Nov. 6, 1718 — Nov. 8(?), 1718  
(Temporary keeper.)
- John Hayes.....Nov. 8, 1718 — Nov. 8, 1733  
(Appointment dated Nov. 18, 1718, received  
pay from Nov. 8.)
- Robert Ball.....Nov. 8, 1733 — —, 1774  
(Petitioned in February, 1774, for pay of year  
ending Nov. 19, 1773, died Oct. 10, 1774.)
- (Perhaps for a time, William  
Minns)..... —, 1774 — June 13, 1776  
(When Lighthouse was blown up by the British.)

### NEW LIGHTHOUSE BUILT 1783.

- Thomas Knox.....Nov. 28, 1783 — —, 1811  
(June 10, 1790, lighthouse was ceded to the  
United States.)

Jonathan Bruce..... —, 1811 — —, 1833  
 David Tower.....Sept. 11, 1833 — Oct. 8, 1844

(The date of his death.)

Joshua Snow.....Oct. 29 (?), 1844 — Dec. 30, 1844  
 Tobias Cook.....Dec. 30, 1844 — Oct. 2, 1849  
 William Long.....Oct. 2, 1849 — Sept. 16, 1851  
 Zebedee Small.....Sept. 16, 1851 — June 2, 1853  
 Hugh Douglass.....June 2, 1853 — April 24, 1856  
 Moses Barrett.....April 24, 1856 — Nov. 20, 1862  
 Charles E. Blair.....Nov. 20, 1862 — July 18, 1864  
 Thomas Bates.....July 18, 1864 — April 6, 1893

(The date of his death.)

Alfred Williams.....April 6, 1893 — May 3, 1893

(First Assistant in charge.)

Albert M. Horte.....May 3, 1893 — May 1, 1894  
 Henry L. Pingree.....May 1, 1894 — Nov. 1, 1909  
 Levi B. Clark.....Nov. 1, 1909 —

(The present keeper.)



# THE SITE OF FANEUIL HALL

BY

WALTER KENDALL WATKINS





## THE SITE OF FANEUIL HALL.

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A PAPER PREPARED FOR THE BOSTONIAN SOCIETY, BY

WALTER KENDALL WATKINS.

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THE plan reproduced in the accompanying plate from an original in the Bostonian Society's collection, is unique and of great interest to Bostonians. In the earliest days of the town a lease was granted to Valentine Hill and his associates, of the lands around the Town or Bendall's Dock as it was first called. A reversion was also given to James Everell later.

At the expiration of the lease the ownership of the town in certain buildings was agitated and actions commenced to dispossess tenants. During the controversies various plans of the territory were prepared, and the plan shown is one of several that have been preserved. It relates to the land bordering on the south of the Town Dock, between what is now Corn Court and



Merchants Row, a part of Faneuil Hall Square. Anciently it was known as Market Square and still earlier, as the Corn Market and Dock Market.

The plan shows the early shore line, which caused the angle in the Square, and possessions of three early settlers, Thomas Venner, Valentine Hill and Edward Tyng. Of these, Venner, — best known in history as a "Fifth Monarchy Man," — was a wine cooper in Boston from 1644, to October, 1651, when he sailed to England, where on January 6, 1661, he ran a bloody riot in London streets with his associates, and January 19, 1661, was drawn, hanged and quartered as a leader of the mob.

Valentine Hill was a prominent merchant and land owner, and the plan shows part of his possessions, which he sold to Richard Hutchinson in 1644. On this land, between the highway and Dock, was a warehouse occupied in 1732 by Thomas Palmer, a prominent merchant.

On what is now the corner of Merchants Row and Faneuil Hall Square was the house, warehouse, brew house and yard of Edward Tyng in the earliest days of the town. In 1646 he sold to Henry Webb as stated by the plan. Webb's house was on the west corner of State and Devonshire Streets. His only daughter Margaret married (1) Jacob Sheafe, and (2) Thomas Thacher. A granddaughter, Elizabeth Sheafe, married (1) Robert Gibbs, and (2) Jonathan Curwen of Salem. This granddaughter inherited the warehouse and wharf

at the Town Dock, and in 1703 leased the brick shop and the land behind and adjoining, and seventy-two feet of wharf, upon the Town Dock, to Alexander Shearer or Sherwood, as he was sometimes called, a cooper by trade. Mrs. Elizabeth (Sheafe) Gibbs-Curwen died August 29, 1718, and in 1732 the warehouse and wharf were the property of her grandson, Henry Gibbs, brazier, of Boston.

In the winter of 1732/3, on November 28, 1732, and February 24, 1732/3, Henry Gibbs had raised two framed structures on this wharf. This work was done by Gershom Flagg at a cost of seventy pounds for the materials and labor.

March 12, 1732/3, in town meeting it was ordered, inasmuch as Mr. Henry Gibbs had encroached on the town's land by erecting frames, that the selectmen shall demolish them. This was attended to, at the next meeting of the selectmen, and Mr. Joseph Russell, housewright, was employed to do this work and this he did, tendering them to Mr. Gibbs who refused them, and they were carted by Samuel Duncan, carter, to Mr. Russell's timber-yard.

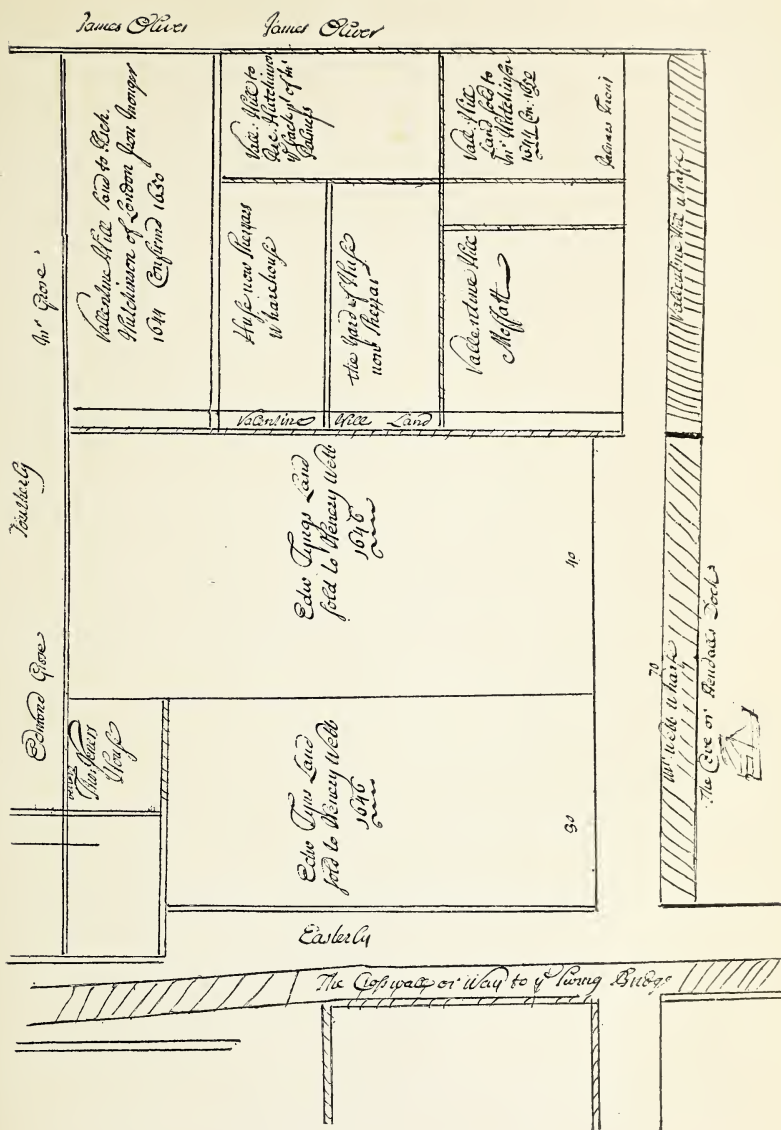
Aggrieved by the removal of his frames Mr. Gibbs brought suit in the Inferior Court of Common Pleas for trespass by Joseph Russell and his assistants, John Webber, housewright, and Duncan, the carter. A jury of twelve gave a verdict to Mr. Gibbs and a judgment for him of eighty pounds. The case was then appealed

to the Superior Court of Judicature. Mr. Russell and his associates were defended by John Read, attorney for the town, formerly Attorney-general of the Province, who argued that the land on which the frames stood was freehold of the inhabitants. At the August, 1733, term of the Superior Court a jury, "indifferent" to the case, could not be got, as they were probably all townsmen, and it was continued to the fall term. The following were then summoned as witnesses: — Thomas Palmer, Esq., Gershom Flagg, James Cock, James Young, Nathaniel Bird, William Pritchard, Caleb Lyman, Jr., Peter Cotta, Samuel Ellis and Belcher Noyes. The majority of these testified to the labor of erecting the frames and that Mr. Gibbs had improved the wharf for two years past.

One of the depositions is worth giving in full, as it refers to the wharf in dispute and also the adjoining wharf, claimed also by the town. The deponent, Thomas Palmer, merchant, was a member of the Council and a Judge of the Inferior Court from 1711 till his death in 1740. Suit was also brought against him by the town for the wharf in front of his warehouse, shown in the plan as Valentine Hill's Wharf.

[ENDORSED] DEPOSITION IN MR. GIBBS'S AFFAIRS.

The Deposition of Thomas Palmer of Boston Esq<sup>r</sup> of full age Testifys and Saith That having for many y<sup>rs</sup> posses'd a Wharfe and Shop thereon in the Occupation of W<sup>m</sup> Pain



PLAN OF ESTATES ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE TOWN DOCK.



Join<sup>r</sup> and W<sup>m</sup> Owèn, Tayler, formerly Called & known by the Name of the Crane house or Hutchinsons Crane house adjoining to the Wharfe Reputed to be and belong to the Ancest<sup>rs</sup> of Mr. Henry Gibbs of Boston Ironmong<sup>r</sup> on the East Which Wharfe for many y<sup>rs</sup> past was Occupy'd by Mr. Alex<sup>r</sup> Sherrer, Coop<sup>r</sup> and I presume to the Day of his Death. The Capfill of which Wharfe Ranged eaquall, w<sup>th</sup> the Capfill of the fd Wharfe I possesse in a streight line Eastw<sup>d</sup> as near as I could Guesse, whereon there was fix'd or Built a Crane, to hoist our Goods, from Boats in the Dock that frequented the same, for that purpose, Being then all open for Boates & Vessels to come to the said Wharfe, tho Lately fill'd up at the pleasure of the Town and further saith not

Tho<sup>s</sup> Palmer

Nov 16 1733 Sworne by  
the Dep<sup>t</sup> in Sup<sup>r</sup> Court at Boston  
Att Benj<sup>a</sup> Rolfe. Cler.

Endorsed "Judge Palmers Deposition in the Town Cause."

In the higher Court Read represented Russell or the town, and Gibbs was represented by Robert Auchmuty, who in this year was appointed Judge of Admiralty for New England. Auchmuty, in his answer to the reasons for appeal of John Read, gives the fact that many papers that would have proved Gibbs's title were lost in the Great Fire of 1711, when the house of Gibbs's father was burned.

He recited that the town vote in 1647 was that Mr. Henry Webb enjoy the wharf purchased of Edward



Tyng : that the deed of Edward Tyng bounded the land on the north side by the Cove : that the Colony law of possession for five years of 1652-1657 gave title as did the Province law of 1692-1704 : that it was Edward Tyng's "proprietary" before the lease of 1641 to Valentine Hill and others, who were granted the waste ground to Edward Tyng's "proprietary" : that contrary to the terms of the reversion, "that the passage of vessels to and out of the Dock should not be stopped," the town themselves had filled up the Dock, whereby the water did not come up to Gibbs's wharf by above one hundred feet where it used to, and Gibbs could make no other improvement of the wharf than setting up shops on it : that at the town meeting of June 26, 1733, the town voted "that the selectmen be desired to treat with Thomas Palmer and Henry Gibbs with respect to their wharves, and receive such proposals as shall be made by them, and make report at the next town meeting" : and finally, that the Moderator, Mr. Elisha Cooke, told the Town Clerk "not to record this vote as it might be used against the town in the suit " and it was not recorded.

Mr. Auchmuty was of the opinion that the town wanted Mr. Gibbs's wharf to add to their Market Place, and that it was a poor way to go about it.

While Mr. Gibbs's case was before the Courts, he, with Judge Palmer, presented memorials to the town in regard to the disputed property, which were read at

different town meetings and a committee appointed to prosecute Mr. Gibbs. Mr. Read and Mr., afterward Gov. Shirley, each received a fee of three pounds to appear as counsel.

In the Superior Court the result was a confirmation of the verdict in the lower Court in favor of Mr. Gibbs. In January, 1734, other suits for possession of buildings on the west and north of the Cove or Dock were of more interest and importance, and were prosecuted by the town and its opponents, and Mr. Middlecot Cooke was employed to search the record books and files of the town for evidence, for which service he received fifteen pounds. It was probably his labors which produced this with other plans of the locality.

These suits were decided against the town in the lower and higher Courts, but on an appeal to the Privy Council in England the verdict was reversed in favor of the town, and Mr. Gibbs probably relinquished his claim to the wharf.

A reference to Judge Palmer's deposition shows that the Dock had been filled in by the town previous to 1733, and this had been proposed as early as March, 1727, and in town meeting July 1, 1728, the selectmen were instructed to fill the whole south part of the Dock. In March, 1734, a committee, of which Judge Palmer was one, reported that the open space on the Town Dock or Wharf was a suitable place for a market in the middle of the town, and one was erected. In a few

years it became neglected and was demolished, and had been pulled down by 1740, when Peter Faneuil offered to erect a market house on the site.

It may also be of interest to state that a small piece of land on the corner of Merchants Row and Faneuil Hall Square, measuring twenty-three feet on the Corn Market and twenty feet on Merchants Row, was purchased December, 1726, by Stephen Minot of Henry Gibbs, to obtain an entrance to the former's warehouse. Minot claimed it as the town's land, and part of the street, while Gibbs claimed it as his land. It was then deeded over to the town to remain open forever as a highway. This "jog" in Merchants Row can be seen at the present day by passers on that thoroughfare, and within a short time has been disputed ground between the city and abutters.

In preparing this paper the writer mentioned the existence of the deed (which is not recorded in the County Registry of Deeds, but in the town's record book of deeds) and thus furnished a long-sought-for evidence of the land being part of the street.

Merchants Row was widened in 1806 and 1826, when projecting private ownerships, shown on early maps, were removed.



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